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African American Culture



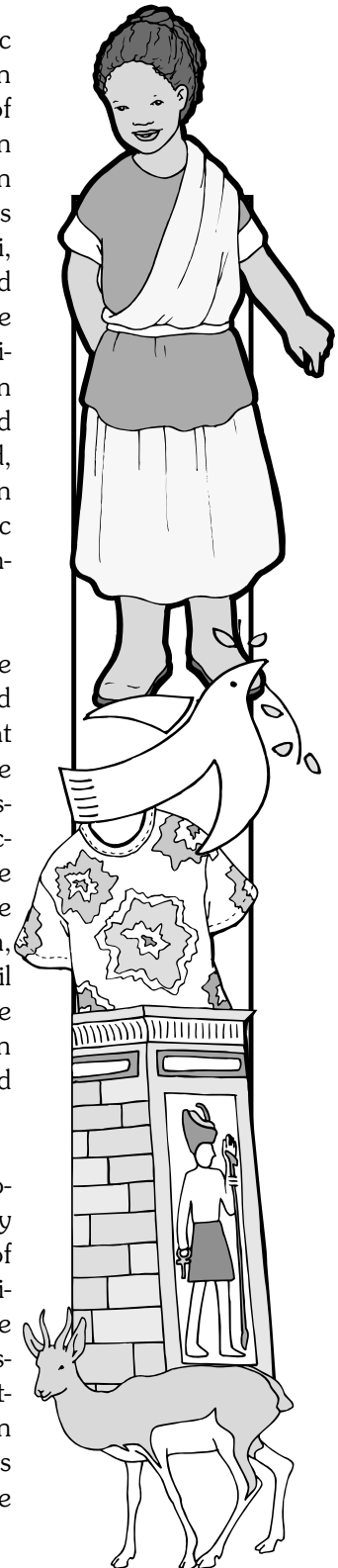
African American Culture



African Americans comprise one of the largest ethnic groups in our country. American society has been heavily influenced by the culture and personalities of African Americans. Human history begins in eastern and southern Africa, where evidence of the first human beings has been found. The history of African Americans begins in ancient Africa where the kingdoms of Mali, Ghana and Songhai left a legacy of literature, art and music. Today, African culture continues in many diverse forms across the 50 independent countries on the continent. Over 3,000 ethnic groups who speak more than 1,000 different languages contribute to the cultural and ethnic traditions that influence people all over the world, particularly the United States. While most African Americans cannot trace their family history to specific countries in Africa, their historical roots stem from central and west Africa where these kingdoms flourished.

African Americans were held in captivity in the United States for more than two hundred years and yet they developed a culture and community spirit that thrived. The myths that supported the African slave trade were expressly designed to create the false impression that Africans were subhuman and lacked the structures of European civilization. African Americans have played important roles in shaping the history and culture of the United States during the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Notable African Americans include Harriet Tubman; Malcolm X; W.E.B. DuBois; Martin Luther King, Jr.; George Washington Carver and Sojourner Truth.

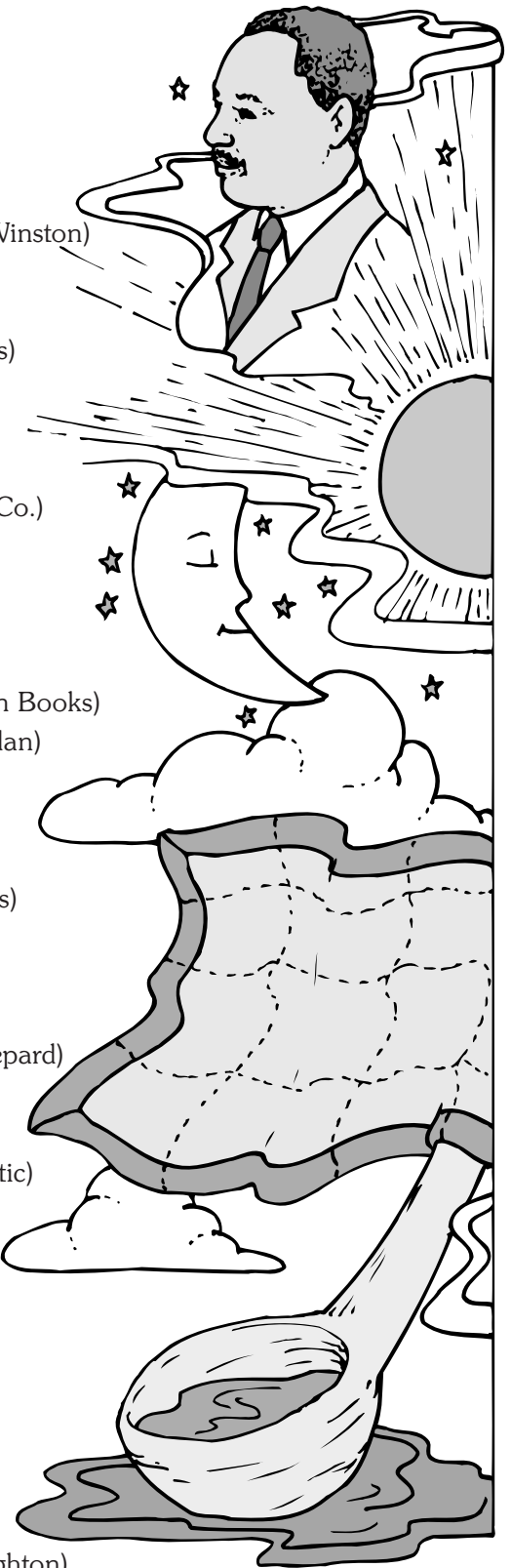
African Americans' lasting contributions to the history and culture of the United States is particularly impressive considering their limited rights and denial of the economic, social and political gains which other citizens have enjoyed. African Americans today still struggle to reclaim their past traditions and to forge a strong, positive identity for their culture which has been discriminated against for much of the history of this country. An appreciation of African and African American traditions will help your students understand the strengths of these two great cultures.





Literature

- Abiyoyo* by Pete Seeger (Macmillian)
African Dream by Eloise Greenfield (Thomas E. Crowell)
Aio, the Rain Maker by Fiona French (Oxford University Press)
Amos Fortune by Elizabeth Yates (Dutton)
Anansi the Spider by Gerald McDermott (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston)
Ashanti to Zulu by Margaret Musgrove (Dial Press)
The Black Snowman by Phil Mendz (Scholastic)
Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain by Verna Aardema (Dial Press)
Chicken Sunday by Patricia Polacco (Philomel)
Children of the Sun by Jan Carue (Little, Brown & Co.)
Cornrows by Camille Yarbrough (Coward-McCann)
Darkness and the Butterfly by Ann Grifalconi (Little, Brown & Co.)
The Drinking Gourd by F.N. Monjo (HarperCollins)
Edgar Allan by John Neufeld (Phillips)
Flossie and the Fox by Patricia McKissack (Dial Books)
Follow the Drinking Gourd by Jeanette Winter (Knopf)
Half a Moon and One Whole Star by C. Dragonwagon (Aladdin Books)
The House of Dies Drear by Virginia Hamilton (Collier Macmillan)
Iggie's House by Judy Blume (Bradbury)
Jafta by Hugh Lewin (Carolrhoda Books)
Jamaica-Tag-Along by Juanita Havill (Houghton Mifflin Co.)
Ji-nongo Nongo Means Riddles by Verna Aardema (Four Winds)
Kwanzaa by A.P. Porter (Carolrhoda Books)
M.C. Higgins, the Great by Virginia Hamilton (Macmillan)
Mirandy and Brother Wind by Patricia McKissack (Knopf)
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by J. Steptoe (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard)
Not So Fast, Songololo by Niki Daly (Atheneum)
The Patchwork Quilt by Valerie Flournoy (Dial Books)
A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr. by D. Adler (Scholastic)
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor (Dial)
Sam by Ann Scott (McGraw)
Scorpions by Walter Myers (Harper)
The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats (Viking)
Soul Looks Back in Wonder by Tom Feelings (Dial)
Sunder by William Armstrong (Harper)
Stevie by John Steptoe (Harper)
Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush by Virginia Hamilton (Philomel)
Tell Me a Story Mama by Angela Johnson (Orchard Books)
Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky by E. Dayrell (Houghton)
Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema (Dial Books)

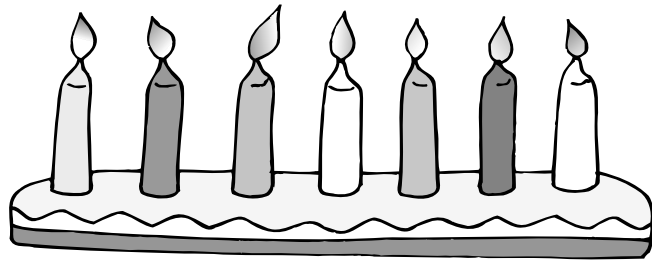


Celebrations



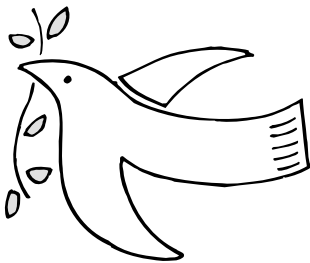
Emancipation Proclamation

On January 1 we celebrate the anniversary of President Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves.



Kwanzaa

African American families celebrate this cultural holiday created by Dr. Maulana Karenga between December 26 and January 1.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday

Martin Luther King was born on January 15, 1929. Many churches and synagogues around the country hold memorial services to honor MLK. King's most famous peaceful demonstration was the march that he and 200,000 followers took from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. It was there King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Emancipation Day

Abraham Lincoln read the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862.

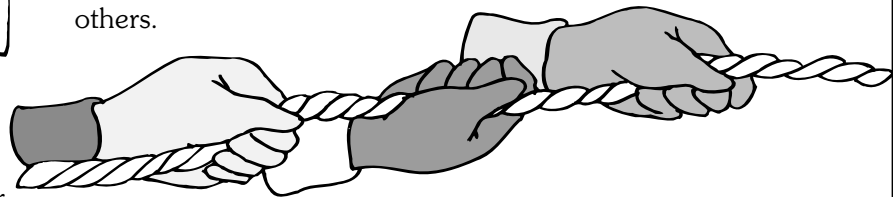


National Black History Month

In February we celebrate the contributions of famous African Americans such as Langston Hughes, Thurgood Marshall and others.

Harambee Day

During the last week in October we celebrate this day which means, "Let's all pull together."



National Freedom Day

On February 1 we celebrate the abolition of slavery in the U.S. which occurred in 1863.