

# Black History Month

Year 3 and Year 4

Black History Month Activity Pack

Growing up,  
They always told me  
Black is darkness and  
White is light;  
Black is a stain and  
Purity, is white.

They always told me  
I could lie, but  
Only the white kind.

Well, I'm sorry  
But I refuse  
To let these  
Colours stain my mind,  
For the truth is  
Black and white  
And I am not blind.

For black to me is  
Beauty,  
Bold and benign.  
Without the black  
Of the night's sky  
What star would ever shine?

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But I refuse  
To let these  
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For the truth is  
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And I  
Am not blind.

Anon.

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## Go to the Back Rosa Parks

Go to the back of the bus, Rosa Parks  
Go to the back and stay  
“No, I won’t, I think that’s unfair  
And I’m just too tired today.”

But everyone knows the rules, Rosa Parks  
Everyone knows if you’re black  
You can’t eat at white restaurants  
And on busses, you sit in the back

So now it’s time to move, Rosa Parks  
“No, I’m not moving at all  
I’ve got a voice and I’m going to use it  
And thousands will hear the call.”

“We’re coming to sit with you, Rosa Parks”  
People black and white did say  
“We’re coming to change America  
And bring equality here to stay!”

By Rita Dove

### How to prepare

Before planning your Black History learning, please ensure that you have read the main blurb so you know

- What resources are there?
- When do I use them?
- How do I use them?
- What can I do to prepare?

### Links to the National Curriculum

National Curriculum	Writing Objectives
Year 3	Write for a range of purposes and audiences based on personal experiences and high quality texts
	Use a range of adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions for time, place and cause
	Demarcate direct speech with inverted commas (speech marks)
	Consistently use features of standard English and explore when non-standard English could be used
	Use nouns and pronouns to aid cohesion within sentences
Year 4	Read their own writing aloud using appropriate intonation and controlling the tone and volume so that the meaning is clear
	Write for a range of purposes and audiences based on personal experiences and high quality texts
	Use possessive pronouns
	Use noun phrases expanded with modifying adjectives, nouns and prepositional phrases
	Use nouns and pronouns to aid cohesion and avoid repetition within paragraphs

	Use inverted commas and other punctuation accurately to mark speech
	Control the use of standard and non-standard English
	Read their own writing aloud using appropriate intonation and controlling the tone and volume so that the meaning is clear

National Curriculum	Reading Objectives
Year 3 & 4	Recite poems by heart, using intonation, tone and volume to gain the interest of the listener
	Identify and discuss the meaning of words in context
	Identify words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and contribute to the meaning of the text
	Discuss their understanding of both texts they have read independently and those read to them
	Express their views and listen to the views of others
	Identify the over-arching theme of a text
	Ask relevant questions to clarify and improve their understanding of a text
	Draw inferences about characters' thoughts and actions
	Justify inferences with a single piece of evidence from the text to support one specific point
	If researching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a main topic to research, independently and through shared reading</li> <li>• Use skimming to locate main ideas in the text</li> <li>• Use scanning to locate pieces of information</li> <li>• Identify the structural conventions of non-fiction in relation to the text type (see range)</li> </ul>



## Context:

### Teaching points:

- History of Rosa Parks
- Figures in history that have paved the way for equality
- History of racism in UK and US

### 'Growing Up'

What thoughts do the children have on this poem? Do they agree/disagree with any of the statements made in the poem? Have they ever come across these views before? Discuss the diversity of the room. Does it matter what skin colour we have?

Begin to discuss how these views have changed over time. How did they change? Look at Rosa Parks Poem. What did she do to change people's perspectives? Do you know any other figures in history that have stood for equality?

### Learning About Rosa Parks:

Black children in the late 19th century and early 20th century had separate schools to white children.

Among other things, they had separate schools, churches, libraries, restaurants, toilets, drinking fountains and waiting rooms. In some areas, there were laws banning black people from sports events and even forbidding them to work in the same office as a white person.

African Americans had far fewer rights, too. Racist laws known as '**Black Codes**' restricted them to low-paying jobs and made it incredibly difficult for them to vote. These laws also meant black people could be arrested for small things.

In the face of such racism, Rosa decided to make a stand for what was right. Together with her husband Raymond, she joined the **National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP)**, working towards putting an end to discrimination and segregation.

But it was on the **1 December 1955** that Rosa truly sparked change. After a long day at work, Rosa boarded the bus home and took a seat. At that time in Montgomery, seats at the front of buses were reserved for white passengers, and the seats at the back for black passengers.

The bus quickly filled up and when a white man boarded, the driver told the African American passengers to give up their seats for him. Whilst the other black passengers obeyed, Rosa did not. The result? Rosa was arrested by the police and fined for breaking segregation laws! But Rosa refused to pay, and argued that it was the **law that was wrong**, not her behaviour.

On news of Rosa's arrest, the black citizens of Montgomery came together and agreed to boycott the city's buses in protest. This meant that from **5 December 1955** (the

date of Rosa's trial), African Americans refused to travel on buses. The boycott was managed by an organisation called the **Montgomery Improvement Association**, for which **Dr Martin Luther King Jr** was elected as leader.

The protest proved super effective, with more black people participating than had been expected. And since African Americans made up around 70% of bus users, the city's transport services made far less money and began to struggle. But it wasn't an easy protest for the black citizens. Many of them didn't own cars, and so they had to carpool together or **walk long distances** to get where they needed to go. What's more, the boycott was received with anger by members of the white population, who responded with aggressive and dangerous acts of violence.

Nevertheless, the protesters stuck together and fought for their cause - and on **13 November 1956** their efforts were finally rewarded. After **381 days** of boycotting the buses, the **Supreme Court** ruled that Alabama's racial segregation laws were 'unconstitutional' - meaning they weren't valid and should not be recognised. In light of such a wonderful victory, Rosa became known as "**the mother of the civil rights movement**".

Sadly, despite the victory, life wasn't easy for Rosa and her fellow activists after the boycott. Faced with continued violence and threats by angry white groups, Rosa and Raymond moved to Detroit (a city in the northern US state of Michigan), to live with Rosa's brother.

There she continued to promote civil rights and help those suffering from discrimination and injustice. She continued to support the NAACP and many civil rights events, and in 1987 she co-founded the **Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development** to provide career training for young people in Detroit.

Rosa received numerous awards for her strength, courage and her incredible work for civil rights - including the **Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996** and the **Congressional Gold Medal in 1999**.

#### **Activities based on Rosa Parks:**

- What questions would you like to ask Rosa Parks? The person who asked her to move?
- Children to write an additional narrative scene with a conversation between the two, whilst on the bus.
- Children write a letter of complaint to a local counsellor from either Rosa Parks or the person who asked her to move.
- Diary entry of the confrontation from Rosa, the person who asked her to move or an eye witness.
- Role on the wall- draw round a child on a large piece of paper. Write things we know about what Rosa parks looks like outside of the template. On the inside of the template write words to describe her personality. This can be linked to theme. Children can then write a description of Rosa Parks. Alternatively, write how Rosa is feeling about the way she is treated and others' thoughts on the outside. (The outside could be divided into two sections: those who think she should move and those who are proud of her for making a stand.)



### Research about Black History:

- Children ask questions, considering what they would like to know about Black History:
  - What other famous black people stood up for their rights?
  - Where and when did racism start?
  - What could white people do that black people couldn't? (research different countries/ time periods?)
  - What made things change?
- Class/ group research (using research skills listed in reading curriculum coverage section).

Possible supplementary text: [Rosa Parks: Little People, Big Dreams: 7](#)

### Activities:

- Opportunities for whole class reading of the poem. Children could take a line each or work in pairs/groups. Actions can be encouraged along with the reading of the poem.
- To contextualise and understand the situation, two children could freeze frame an image of Rosa Parks and the bus driver yelling at her to move. Children could come into the image, touching one of the character's shoulders and share what the character could be thinking/feeling. Why did these people act this way?
- Conscience alley: Acting as someone with a racist view of the world, this person to walk through the lines of children. What advice would you give someone with these views? Children to encourage equality and diversity.
- Timeline of key moments in black history regarding figures and events. Children to work together to create a human timeline from the cards and discuss how each event/figure contributed to moving towards an equal society.
- Children to research a figure/event and create a presentation to present to the class afterwards. (See resource: [70 Windrush Pioneers and Champions](#))
- Soundscape activity. What might it have sounded like on the bus? What might you have heard? Think about human sounds, industrial sounds etc e.g. people whispering, people shouting, shuffling of feet, engine running of the bus, flipping of newspaper pages etc. Create a soundscape of what it might have sounded like on the bus. What might it have felt like to be a black person on a bus in a predominantly pro white time? Discuss.

## Theme

### Teaching points:

- The poems 'Colour Blind' and 'Not Blind' would work well with the poems and help being able to explore themes of racism and equality.
- Possible themes to discuss:
  - racism
  - respect
  - equality
  - empowerment and strength
  - courage
  - positivity
  - stereotypes
  - knowing right from wrong

After reading both poems, children could create a mind map with the themes that they can identify in the two poems to open discussions up to start off with and see what children already know. (There is a list of themes in the 'resources' section.)

Make sure that children know what each of these themes mean and display some class definitions around the room to help (see resources posters).

### Theme actions activity:

In groups, children to be given a theme to look at. Children to read the definition and make sure all definitions are discussed before the task to make sure they understand. Children to create actions to represent their theme and perform as a group. E.g. kindness could be miming giving a love heart with hands, people with their arms around each other, inviting someone left out to play with them etc. Children to explain what their action is, why they chose it and how it represents the theme.

### Odd one out activity:

In resources, there are sheets with words on that are related to the different themes. Place them up around the room. The children can then walk around the room and look at these posters. The children then have to identify the odd word out on that sheet and say why that word is the odd one out for that theme.

### Cross cutting activity:

Use the 'Growing Up' poem

Split the class into groups.

The groups will either act out verse 1 or verse 4. Give children time to learn and practise the verse and come up with actions.

Choose a group to act out verse 1 and verse 4. The group performing verse 4 performs straight after the group performing verse 1.

The rest of the class to watch and then discuss differences and how the theme has changed from racism and being ashamed of being black to empowerment and courage.

You might also want to look at how initially the reader may feel it is white people wanting the black people to sit in certain places, but reading that last line, discuss the meaning. Have some white people changed their mind? Found their voice?

You could also try having one group frozen on a powerful freeze frame for their verse whilst the other group performs.

This can be used similarly with 'Go to the back Rosa Parks' using verse 1 and 4 to illustrate racism and change to equality at the end of the poem.

#### **Image activity:**

- Show children some images of groups of black people and white people stuck on A3 paper (Some images are in the 'resources' section). The Rosa Parks image of her sitting on the bus and refusing to move works well.
- Discuss children's thoughts about these images. The final image could be used to discuss whether racism still exists and whether we have achieved equality yet or not.
- Use this as a way in to discuss stereotypes about white people and black people, white privilege and racism. Discuss this with the children. The book 'Race Cars' by Jenny Devenny illustrates white privilege well for children and opens up discussions.
- Challenge these stereotypes with children and get them to write positive words about both the black and the white images around the pictures.
- The Y1/2 poem 'The Crayon Box That Talked' would work well with this activity and could open up discussions about equality, accepting everyone and seeing beauty in all colours (strong links to race also). *A link to the Y1/2 poems to be found in main blurb under 'All Black History Poems'.*

#### **Thought tapping activity:**

- Get children thinking about how different characters would be feeling at different points in the Rosa Parks poem (e.g. Rosa when she's told to go to the back, when she refuses, at the end when other support her, white people telling her to go to the back, white people standing with her etc)
- Children to create freeze frames of different scenarios, then choose children whose thoughts you want to 'tap into' and ask how they are feeling or what is going through their head.
- Use different characters in different scenarios to show different perspectives.
- Discuss this as a class together afterwards.

**Flash forward activity:**

- Discuss with the children and try to illustrate the changes and the progress that we have made towards equality, empowerment and racism, but make it clear to children we still have a way to go and that it is their responsibility to uphold these values etc. The Y1/2 poem 'Colour Blind' could work well with this activity to emphasise equality also. *A link to the Y1/2 poems to be found in main blurb under 'All Black History Poems'.*
- Choose a part from either poem which shows the inequalities/racism/divide between white and black people and get children to create a freeze frame (e.g. Rosa Parks being told to sit at the back or how in the 'Growing Up' poem they start off with the negative language about black people).
- Then, flash forwards to today and the children have to create a new freeze frame to show how things have changed and that there is more equality for black people.
- If you wanted to, you could then go on to create a future flash forward to what you think equality might look like in 10, 20, 50 years' time etc.
- The key here is to make sure you have those discussions with children about racism and equality and just general discussions about what is right and wrong.

Books about celebrating our differences/ being yourself	Books about race
All are welcome	I am everything good - Derrick Barnes Sulwe - Lupita Nyong'o Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History - Vashti Hardy Young, Gifted and Black - Jamia Wilson All Because You Matter - Tami Charles Race Cars- Jenny Devenny



## Vocabulary and Language

### Teaching points:

- Read both poems as a class and discuss the poems to check if there is any vocabulary or language that the children need explaining. Probably more so in the 'Growing Up' poem (refuse, benign, stain, purity)
- Discuss definitions and record these on flipchart paper to display during the session

### Go to the back Rosa Parks

#### Activities:

- Identify any strong/powerful words that they can see in the poem that they are drawn to and write these down. Children might also decide to group these words in whatever way they see fit, as long as they can explain and justify their rationale. Some possible words the children might identify:

unfair, voice, tired, no, can't, back, the call, equality, stay, move, rules, black, etc

How would you say these words? Are these words used in positive or negative ways in the poem? How does it feel to say these words in different ways? Experiment with saying these words in different ways and think about which context they are used in within the poem.

- Discuss with the children who they think is talking in the poem. Is it just one person? More than one person? Predominantly, this poem is divided into white people and Rosa Parks representing black people. Does the vocabulary and language change throughout the poem? Does it become more positive? Discuss with the children and see if they notice that the negativity and racism from the white perspective at the start of the poem changes as the poem goes on and finishes with them supporting Rosa Parks. Allow opportunity for discussion of racism and equality, what it means, why it is important and if children ask and are interested you could explore how these issues used to be very prominent in society.
- Conscience alley adaptation. Choose individual children to walk down the middle of the classroom taking the role of Rosa Parks with children lining either side. As the child walks down the middle, children to either choose a powerful word or phrase from the poem to say to Rosa Parks. Get children to start with the negative phrases and words and discuss how it feels to say those things and how it feels to



hear them. Then repeat it a few times in the same style as the poem, so the first children use negative phrases and words and then as the child moves down the line they turn more positive and empowering.

- Host a debate. One half of the room to be on the side that thinks Rosa Parks should have gone to the back of the bus, the other half supporting her staying at the front. Emphasise that this is just for arguments sake and discuss moral judgement (right and wrong) afterwards. When debating, children to have the vocabulary challenge mat in the resources visible. Discuss meanings of the words beforehand to support the children. When debating, if children use a word on the vocabulary challenge point, they get a bonus point in their debate. Play a bit of 'Rocky' music before starting the debate to set the atmosphere if you want.

### Growing Up

#### Activities:

- Adjectives/ metaphors activity:

Pick out the adjectives in verse one of the poem which describe white and black and write them on two pieces of A3 paper/different lists to display at the front of the class. What do the children notice about the differences between the adjectives in each column? Discuss how again black is seen more negatively than white. Then identify the adjectives used in paragraph four. Discuss how these have changed.

In groups, children can work together to think of positive adjectives that could be used to describe black and white. Mind map these on sheets of paper or children can write on post it notes and add these to the board at the front. Children can then use these new adjectives to write an alternative verse for the poem showing both black and white positively.

- Comparative activity between poems:

Look at the two poems and compare the vocabulary used. Which one has higher level vocabulary or more interesting vocabulary? Children to go through the 'Go to the back Rosa Parks' poem and have a go at substituting some of the vocabulary by finding alternative synonyms and producing a cline/colour chart to show the effects of different words e.g. for 'tired':

fatigued  
gradient  
whacked

These words might be higher up the

exhausted  
sapped  
over worked  
drained  
**tired**  
worn out  
sleepy  
drowsy  
weary  
gradient

These words might be lower down the

You could then act these words out to make sure children can understand the differences between what 'sleepy' might look like compared to 'fatigued' for example. You could then ask children to think of a time when they have felt these different levels of tired to make it tangible and real life for them.

Extension:

An extension to this task could be to play 'Word XFactor'. Emphasise to the children that whilst they have created a vast bank of words that mean the same as 'tired', those words may not always be appropriate in the context of the sentence. It's not always about a words being 'better'. Then discuss if any are 'slang'- is that appropriate to use in this poem? Overworked may make us feel like her employer is taking advantage of her. Sleepy makes us have less empathy for her.

Have a play around with replacing words in sentences for other synonyms and see which words have the 'XFactor' within that sentence and which words don't work.

E.g.

Original:

No, I won't, I think that's unfair,  
And I'm just too **tired** today.

Possible XFactor example:

No, I won't, I think that's unfair,  
And I'm just too **exhausted** today.

Possible doesn't work example:

No, I won't, I think that's unfair,  
And I'm just too **drowsy** today.

## Figurative language

### Go to the back Rosa Parks

Hyperbole: 'and thousands will hear the call'

Personification: 'and bring equality here to stay'

Repetition - bus, go to the back, everyone knows, sit

### Growing Up

Alliteration: 'Bold and benign'

Metaphor: 'Black is darkness and white is light. Black is a stain and purity is white'

Personification: 'Colours stain my mind'

Repetition: verse 3 and 5, they always told me.

### Activities:

- Growing Up has many examples of metaphors. Children to recreate a metaphor style poem about racism or Rosa Parks. Create their own metaphors and then work together to create a whole class poem or group poem.
- Select a metaphor- what is the impact on the reader? Why can they see in their mind? Children recreate the image- merging the words with the impact on the reader. If it is a positive image, their illustration needs to reflect that.
- Figurative language scavenger hunt through the poems. Can the children create sentences for the remaining figurative language styles that can't be found in the poem?
- Create figurative language examples around equality and freedom as a response to these poems. Children can have a sheet of paper on tables that they move around the classroom to try and fill with examples of each type of figurative language. With these on the wall, they can create their own equality poem as a response. Children to share poems aloud in front of the class.
- Get children to identify which statements have impact. Why? Sort them into those that use figurative language and those that don't. Discuss their favourite phrases e.g.- bold and benign. Why do they like

it? Is it because of the alliteration? Say it together: do the children emphasise the 'b'? Does that make it more powerful? Children select two other adjectives (for this poem or another). Can they create the same impact?

## Resources

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Everyone knows if you're black  
You can't eat at white restaurants  
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So now it's time to move, Rosa Parks  
"No, I'm not moving at all  
I've got a voice and I'm going to use it  
And thousands will hear the call."

"We're coming to sit with you, Rosa Parks"  
People black and white did say  
"We're coming to change America  
And bring equality here to stay!"

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