



SUMMER 2021

Color Your World with Words

A list of books by authors of color
for educators so they can provide students
with books that reflect their backgrounds
and cultures.

***Laxmi's Mooch* by Shelly Anand and illustrated by Nabi H. Ali**

This joyful picture book about a young Indian American girl's journey of accepting her body hair after she is teased about her mustache. Her parents help young Laxmi learn to love all the hair that she has on her body and to embrace herself. Grades Pre-K-2

***I Got the Rhythm* by Connie Schofield-Morrison**

A little girl hears a rhythm coming from the world around her on a trip to the park — from butterflies and street performers to ice cream sellers, everything is musical! She shakes her way into the heart of the beat and busts out in an impromptu dance. The book captures the beat of the street, and creates a rollicking read that will get any kid in the mood to boogie. Grades Pre-K-2

***Wishes* by Mượn Thị Văn and illustrated by Victo Ngai**

In this hopeful picture book, a little girl tells the story of a Vietnamese family journeying by boat to a new country and all the unspoken wishes that accompany such a harrowing and life-altering journey. Văn's simple and lyrical prose is paired with award-winning artist Victo Ngai's stunning and intricate illustrations. Grades Pre-K to 3

***Watch me: A Story of Immigration and Inspiration* by Doyin Richards and illustrated by Joe Cepeda**

Joe came to America from Africa when he was young. He worked hard in school, made friends, and embraced his new home. Like so many immigrants before and after him, Joe succeeded when many thought he would fail. In telling the story of how his father came to America, the author tells the story of many immigrants, and opens the experience up to readers of all backgrounds. Grades K-2

***Camila, The Record-Breaking Star* by Alicia Salazar and illustrated
by Thais Damiao**

After reading about kid record-breakers, Camila dreams of breaking a record of her own. But which world record should she tackle? No matter what she tries, Camila finds that breaking records is hard. Will she ever become a record-breaking star? Grades 1-2

***The First Rule of Punk* by Celia Perez**

The first rule of punk is to be yourself. At least that is what 12-year-old Malú's father (who lives a thousand miles away) says. There are no shortcuts to surviving your first day at a new school — but on day one, Malú inadvertently upsets Posada Middle School's queen bee, violates the school's dress code with her punk rock look, and disappoints her college-professor mom. Armed with a microphone and scissors, this book is about creating something new. Grades 3-5

***All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team*
by Christina Soontornvat**

This book tells the spellbinding story of the Thai cave rescue of 12 young boys and their coach. Meticulously researched and told with detail and nuanced understanding of the region's culture and religion, this gripping and inspiring story centers the Thai communities — and the boys themselves — that worked tirelessly against impossible odds to achieve miraculous results. Grades 3-7

***Flood City* by Daniel José Older**

Flood City is the last inhabitable place left above the waters that cover Earth. It's also the last battleground between the Chemical Barons, who once ruled the planet and now circle overhead in spaceships, desperate to return, and the Star Guard, who have controlled the city for decades. Born and raised in Flood City, Max doesn't care about being part of either group. All he wants is to play his music with the city band, keep his sister from joining the Star Guard, and be noticed by his crush, the awesome drummer Djinna. Grades 3-7

***The Greatest Superpower* by Alex Sanchez and illustrated by Brann Garvey**

Thirteen-year-old Jorge Fuerte wants to spend his days hanging out with his fellow comic-book-obsessed friends. His parents announce they're divorcing for a reason they never saw coming and Jorge struggles to understand the father he loves. A new girl named Zoey becomes his neighbor and he fears he will have to choose between being loyal to his brother or truthful about his family's secret. Grades 4-6

***Accused: My Story of Injustice* by Adama Bah**

Adama Bah grew up in East Harlem after immigrating from Guinea. At 13, after the events of Sept. 11, 2001, she began experiencing discrimination as prejudice toward Muslim people grew. Then, on March 24, 2005, FBI agents arrested Adama and her father. Falsely accused of being a potential suicide bomber, Adama spent weeks in a detention center being questioned under suspicion of terrorism. With sharp and engaging writing, Adama recounts the events surrounding her arrest and its impact on her life — the harassment, humiliation, and persecution she faced for crimes she didn't commit. Grades 4-7

***The Sea-Ringed World: Sacred Stories of the Americas* by Maria Garcia Esperon and illustrated by Amanda Mijangos**

Fifteen thousand years before Europeans stepped foot in the Americas, people had already spread from tip to tip and coast to coast. Like all humans, these Native Americans sought to understand their place in the universe, the nature of their relationship with the divine, and the origin of the world into which their ancestors had emerged. The answers lay in their sacred stories. Grades 4-9

Please note: Young Adult titles may contain mature content. Please review titles carefully while making selections for students.

***So Many Beginnings: A Little Women Remix* by Bethany C. Morrow**

As the American Civil War rages on, the Freedmen's Colony of Roanoke Island is blossoming, a haven for the recently emancipated. Black people have begun building a community of their own, a refuge from the shadow of the old life. As the four March sisters come into their own as independent young women, together they face first love, health struggles, heartbreak, and new horizons. Grades 6-10

***We are Not Broken* by George M. Johnson**

This is the vibrant story of George, Garrett, Rall, and Rasul — four children raised by Nanny, their fiercely devoted grandmother. The boys hold one another close through early brushes with racism, memorable experiences at the family barbershop, and first loves and losses. And with Nanny at their center, they are never broken. The author captures the experience of growing up as a Black boy in America — exploring themes of vulnerability, sacrifice, and culture. Grades 8-12

***Why We Fly* by Kimberly Jones and Gilly Segal**

Long-time friends and cheerleaders Eleanor and Chanel have a lot on their mind. Eleanor is in physical therapy months after a concussion from a failed cheer attempt. Chanel's putting tremendous pressure on herself to get into the best colleges and starts making questionable decisions. Grappling with the weight of the school's actions as well as their own problems, can the girls rely on the friendship they've always shared? A sometimes humorous, compelling look at friendship, privilege, sports, and race. Grades 8-12

***The Magic Fish* by Trung Le Nguyen**

Tiến loves his family and his friends. He enjoys reading stories with his parents from the books he borrows from the library. It's hard for him to communicate with his parents because he isn't sure there is a Vietnamese word for what he is experiencing. This graphic novel accessibly tackles tough subjects and shows us that even with many obstacles, we can have a happy ending. Grades 7-10

***Beasts of Prey* by Ayana Gray**

As the second son of a decorated hero, Ekon is all but destined to become a Son of the Six — an elite warrior — and uphold a family legacy. But on the night of his final rite of passage, a fire upends his plans. Meanwhile, magic doesn't exist for girls like 16-year-old Koffi. Indentured to the notorious Night Zoo, she cares for its fearsome and magical creatures to pay off her family's debts. Fate binds two Black teenagers together as they strike a dangerous alliance to hunt down the ancient creature menacing their home — and discover much more. Grades 7-9

***Kneel: Justice is a Team Sport* by Candace Buford**

For guys like Russell Boudreaux, football is the only way out of their small town. As the team's varsity tight end, Rus has a singular goal: to get a scholarship and play on the national stage. But when his best friend is unfairly arrested and kicked off the team, Rus faces an impossible choice: live in fear or speak up. Rus kneels during the national anthem. In one instant, he falls from local stardom and becomes a target for hatred. But he's not alone. This novel explores racism, injustice, and self-expression through the story of a promising Black football star in Louisiana. Grades 7-12

***Fat Chance Charlie Vega* by Crystal Maldonado**

Charlie Vega is a lot of things. Smart. Funny. Artistic. Ambitious. Fat. People sometimes have a problem with that last one. Charlie wants a good relationship with her body, but it's hard, and her mom leaving weight loss shakes on her dresser doesn't help. Everyone has ideas about what she should look like: thinner, lighter, slimmer-faced, straighter-haired. *Be smaller. Be whiter. Be quieter.* When Charlie starts a relationship, everything is perfect until she finds out she was second choice. Grades 8-12

***Things We Couldn't Say* by Jay Coles**

There's always been a hole in Gio's life. Not because he's into both guys and girls. Not because his father has drinking issues. Not because his friends are always bringing him their drama. The hole in Gio's life takes the shape of his birth mom, who left Gio, his brother, and his father when Gio was nine years old. For eight years, he never heard a word from her . . . and now, just as he's started to get his life together, she's back. This story is about shows us a guy trying to navigate love in all its ambiguity — hoping at the other end he'll be able to figure things out. Grades 9-12

***Muted* by Tami Charles**

Music is everything for 17-year-old Denver. She wants to perform and she wants to escape her very small, very white hometown. She is very ready on the day she and her best friends Dali and Shak sing their way into the orbit of the biggest R&B star in the world, Sean "Mercury" Ellis. Merc gives them everything: parties, perks, wild nights — plus hours and hours in the recording studio. Even the painful sacrifices and the lies the girls must tell are all worth it. Until they're not. As the dream turns into a nightmare, Denver must make a choice: lose her big break or get broken. Grades 9-12

Websites with more ideas

First Book Marketplace: fbmarketplace.org/new-to-marketplace

This non-profit organization believes that education is the best way out of poverty for children in need. It makes new high-quality books and other resources affordable to its member network. This link takes you to the newest books.

Colorful Pages: colorfulpages.org/

Founded and directed by WEA Board member Kaitlin Kamalei Brandon, this website features multicultural books and lessons.

Epic Reads: epicreads.com/blog/ya-books-poc-writers/

Features Young Adult books by people of color

For a more complete list of books, podcasts and other resources, visit WEA's Racial and Social Justice page on the WEA website, washingtonea.org/resources.