



SPRING 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.

***My Hair is Magic* by M.S. Marroquin and Illustrated by Tonya Engel**

This little girl knows her hair is great just as it is. When people ask, "Why is your hair so BIG?" she answers, "Why isn't yours?" Her hair is soft, it protects her, it's both gentle and fierce. Told in bold verse and vivid, fantastical illustrations, these critical pages show that what really matters is how readers see themselves. Grades P-1

***Julián is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love**

While riding the subway home from the pool with his abuela, Julián notices three women spectacularly dressed up. When he gets home, all he can think about is dressing up like the ladies in his own fabulous mermaid costume. But what will Abuela think about the mess he makes — and even more importantly, what will she think about how Julián sees himself? The book is a jubilant picture of self-love and individuality. Grades P-2

***Big Red Lollipop* by Rukksana Khan and Illustrated by Sophie Blackall**

Rubina has been invited to her first birthday party, and her mother, Ami, insists that she bring her little sister along. Rubina is mortified, but she can't convince Ami that you just don't bring your younger sister to your friend's party. This clever story features Muslim sisters, but not specifically Muslim themes. Grades P-2

***Max and the Tag-Along Moon* by Floyd Cooper**

A gentle moving tale about a little boy and separation from those we love, this story is so calm and a joy to read as it tackles the issue of having to say goodbye. Children love this book as it highlights a strong and loving multi-generational relationship. Grades K-2

***When We Were Alone* by David A. Robertson and Illustrated by Julie Flett**

When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother's garden, she is curious about her grandmother's long, braided hair. As she asks her grandmother, she is told about life in a residential school a long time ago. This is a story about a difficult time in history, and one of empowerment and strength. Grades K-2

***Nina Soni, Former Best Friend* by Kashmira Sheth
and Illustrated by Jenn Kocsmiersky**

Nina tried as hard as she could, but still somehow she forgot about her school project. Fortunately, a class lesson about Alexander Fleming suggests how she might make a great discovery — and thus a great project! Readers are sure to relate to author Kashmira Sheth's endearing Nina Soni and her slightly scatter-brained efforts to manage her life with lists, definitions, and real-life math problems. Grades 2-5

***Loretta Little Looks Back* by Andrea Davis Pinkney
and Illustrated by Brian Pinkney**

Loretta, Roly, and Aggie B., members of the Little family, each present the vivid story of their young lives, spanning three generations. Their separate stories — beginning in a cotton field in 1927 and ending at the presidential election of 1968 — come together to create one unforgettable journey. The novel's unique format invites us to walk in their shoes. Grades 2-5

***Akata Witch and Akata Warrior* by Nnedi Okorafor**

Sunny lives in Nigeria, but she was born in NYC. She looks West African but is so sensitive to the sun (due to her albinism) that she can't play soccer during the day. She doesn't seem to fit in anywhere. Then she learns why. Her classmate Orlu and his friend, Chichi, reveal that they have magical abilities — and so does she. She has lots of catching up to do. Grades 3-7

***Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai**

This novel in verse spends a year with 10-year-old Ha and her family as they flee war-torn Saigon and start a new life in Alabama. Ha weathers bullying from classmates for her appearance and limited English skills until she pushes back. Grades 4-6

***Aru Shah and the City of Gold* by Roshani Chokshi**

Aru Shah wakes up to find herself imprisoned in the Sleeper's lair, staring at his other daughter, Kara, a half-sister she didn't know about until this moment. Needing to escape and get back to her other Pandava sisters, Aru agrees to bring Kara with her. Chokshi's ability to craft stories of adventure, humorous dialogue, strong South Asian female characters, and Hindu cosmology is magic. The series delves into more complex themes of friendship and family without sacrificing any of the clever banter. Grades 4-8

***What if a Fish* by Anika Fajardo**

Half-Colombian Eddie Aguado has never really felt Colombian. Especially after Papa died. He only has Papa's third-place fishing tournament medal to remember him by. He is invited to spend the summer in Colombia with his older half-brother. As his adventure unfolds, he feels more and more like a fish out of water. A whimsical and unflinchingly honest generational story of family where hats turn into leeches and the things you find at the end of your fishing line might not be a fish at all. Grades 6-8

***Luck of the Titanic* by Stacey Lee**

Valora dreams of a new life in America as a circus acrobat in New York City. When she's denied entrance to the Titanic, she stows away and manages to secure first-class accommodations on the ship. But when the luxury ocean liner meets its doom, survival becomes Val's top priority. This historical novel will please anyone interested in *The Titanic*. Grades 6-9

***Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario**

Enrique's mother left Honduras to work in the United States when he was five. At 16, Enrique sets off on his own, armed only with his mother's phone number, riding the tops of freight trains across Mexico with the hope of crossing the border and finding her. Along the way, he faces the gangsters, bandits, and corrupt cops who rule the train route and threaten the lives of the many migrant children. This true story is a detailed representation of the experiences of unaccompanied minors and their journeys to the American border. Grades 6-12

Please note: Young Adult titles may contain mature content.

***Tropical Secrets* by Margarita Engle**

Daniel has escaped Nazi Germany with nothing but a desperate dream that he might one day find his parents again. But that golden land called New York has turned away his ship full of refugees, and Daniel finds himself in Cuba. As the tropical island begins to work its magic on him, the young refugee befriends a local girl with some painful secrets of her own. Yet even in Cuba, the Nazi darkness is never far away. Grades 7-12

***The Beautiful Struggle (Adapted for Young Adults)* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
and Illustrated by Jacki Aher**

This is a deeply intimate memoir by the National Book Award-winning journalist about growing up in Baltimore as the sensitive, book-loving son of a father determined to guide his children toward something better. Grades 7-12

***Flamer* by Mike Curato**

Boy Scout summer camp is fraught with anxiety for the teenager Aiden Navarro when he is bullied for his Filipino heritage, while questioning his religion and sexuality. This graphic novel is a moving story about self-discovery and survival. Grades 8-12

Please note: Young Adult titles may contain mature content.

From a Whisper to a Rallying Cry: The Killing of Vincent Chin and the Trial that Galvanized the Asian American Movement by Paula Yoo

In 1982, Vincent Chin was celebrating his bachelor party at a bar when an argument with two white men turned fatal. Chin's death and the light criminal sentences his killers received incited national protests and a federal trial. Yoo's comprehensive account sheds new light on the tragedy and its legacy. Grades 8-12

The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones by Daven McQueen

For biracial Ethan Harper, who was raised by his white father, race has always been a distant conversation. But when he spends the summer of 1955 with relatives in Alabama, his Blackness is front and center. This is a heartfelt novel about racism, friendship and a summer that changed lives. Grades 8-12

Anger is a Gift by Mark Oshiro

Ever since his father was murdered by an Oakland police officer and vilified by the media, Moss Jefferies suffers from crippling panic attacks. At school, he and his classmates find themselves increasingly treated like criminals. They decide to push back against the administration. When tensions rise and tragedy strikes again, Moss must face a difficult choice: give in to fear and hate or realize that anger can be a gift. Grades 9-12

Please note: Young Adult titles may contain mature content.

All You Can Ever Know by Nicole Chung

In this memoir, Chung recounts her upbringing in Oregon, where she was raised by white parents after her Korean biological parents placed her for adoption. In her predominantly white town, Chung rarely encountered other Asian Americans, but hid the extent of the prejudice she faced from her parents. Faced with becoming a new mom, she decided to track down her birth family, whose complicated and difficult history yielded challenging but illuminating insights.

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*, under "Resources."

