

Book Links

UNPACKING A STANDARD:
EXPLORE BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS RI.1.1– RI.6.1
BY JULIE GREEN

This article was first published
January 27, 2012 (Booklist Online).



The Common Core State Standards are new to all of us, and anything new can always be a little scary. But these new standards are also exciting; they will give educators an opportunity to look at what we're teaching through a different lens and to make our teaching that much more interesting and effective. In this column, which begins with a focus on black-history titles, we'll get to know the standards a little better by following one specific standard from lower elementary through middle school. Along the way, we'll provide examples of how we can use individual books to begin implementing this standard in the classroom. Students, especially younger ones, are full of questions, so standard RI.1.1 is a natural place to start. For more about the Common Core State Standards, visit www.corestandards.org.

Early Elementary

RI.1.1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Jazz Age Josephine. By Jonah Winter. Illus. by Marjorie Priceman. 2012. 40p. Atheneum, \$16.99 (9781416961239). 792.8. K–Gr. 3.

Josephine Baker's life provides so much material for children to wonder about, and this title's beautiful illustrations and rhythmic text invite children to explore this legendary artist. After reading the story aloud, generate a list of questions students have about Baker's life, as revealed in the words and images. This list can form the basis of a mini inquiry unit, with the students' questions as the driving force.

Our Children Can Soar: A Celebration of Rosa, Barack, and the Pioneers of Change. Ed. by Michelle Cook. Illus. by Cozbi A. Cabrera and others. 2009. 32p. Bloomsbury, \$16.99 (9781599904184). PreS–Gr. 3.

In this book, each page depicts a different important historical figure without offering much biographical detail. Phrases such as "Jesse sprinted, so Rosa could sit" will automatically generate the most basic questions: "Who was Jesse?" or "How does sitting help people?" Use these questions as a way to introduce these important historical figures.

Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride. By Andrea Davis Pinkney. Illus. by Brian Pinkney. 2009. 32p. Disney/Jump at the Sun, \$16.99 (9780786807673). K–Gr. 3.

This biographical title is written as a fictional story, and students will naturally want to ask, "Is this real?" Read the story aloud and record the students' questions. Then look at the appended page of factual information, and see if students can discover the answers to their own questions.

Upper Elementary

RI.4.1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

The Great Migration: Journey to the North. By Eloise Greenfield. Illus. by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. 2011. 32p. Amistad, \$16.99 (9780061259210). 811. Gr. 2–4.

Poetry lends itself wonderfully to looking deeply into the meaning behind each word an author chooses. Working in small groups, students could each read a poem in this moving picture-book anthology and document in some way—drawing pictures, recording their voices, or writing in journals—what they feel when they read the poems. Follow this exercise by having the students explain the specific words from the poems that made them feel that way and why.

Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans. By Kadir Nelson. Illus. by the author. 2011. 108p. HarperCollins/Balzer and Bray, \$19.99 (9780061730740). 973. Gr. 3–7.

This exceptional book does just what its title states: it offers a powerful survey of American and African American history. Students could read the book's stories along with primary-source documents, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, to determine how our nations' laws have affected African Americans at the different points described in Nelson's book.

A Nation's Hope: The Story of Boxing Legend Joe Louis. By Matt de la Peña. Illus. by Kadir Nelson. 2011. 40p. Dial, \$17.99 (9780803731677). 796.83092. Gr. 1–3.

Students could choose a particular page or passage in this picture-book biography and research a specific moment in Joe Louis' life or in history. Possible subjects could include: Nazis in WWII Germany, Jim Crow laws, or boxing in the 1940s. Students could use specific words from the book passages as their keywords when doing online research. Then, when presenting their findings, students could explain how the information they found helped them understand the author's messages.

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Middle School

RI.6.1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Little Rock Girl 1957: How a Photograph Changed the Fight for Integration. By Shelley Tougas. 2011. 64p. illus. Capstone, paper, \$8.95 (9780756545123); lib. ed., \$33.99 (9780756544409). 379.2. Gr. 6–9.

This book is filled with images that evoke palpable, immediate emotions. Have students first look at the images and record or discuss the words and feelings that come to mind right away. Then have students read the text related to that image and discuss or write about what they feel. Finally, ask students to return to the text and pick out the specific words that evoked those feelings for them.

Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary. By Elizabeth Partridge. 2009. 80p. illus. Viking, \$19.99 (9780670011896). 323.1196. Gr. 6–12.

This book is broken up into chapters that each represent an important day or days in 1965. Organize students into small groups, and assign each group a chapter in Partridge's title. Then have students work together to pull out phrases or words from the text that best illustrate why the days highlighted in the chapter were so important to the civil rights movement.

Roots and Blues: A Celebration. By Arnold Adoff. Illus. by R. Gregory Christie. 2011. 96p. Clarion, \$17.99 (9780547235547). 811. Gr. 4–8.

Play recordings of blues music in the classroom. After students have listened, ask them to read some of the poems aloud, and discuss together how the words in the text evoke the sounds in blues music.

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