

30 Picture Books To Promote Black Representation In Children's Literature



I threw this together as I've had loads of people asking for recommendations, particularly for very young children.

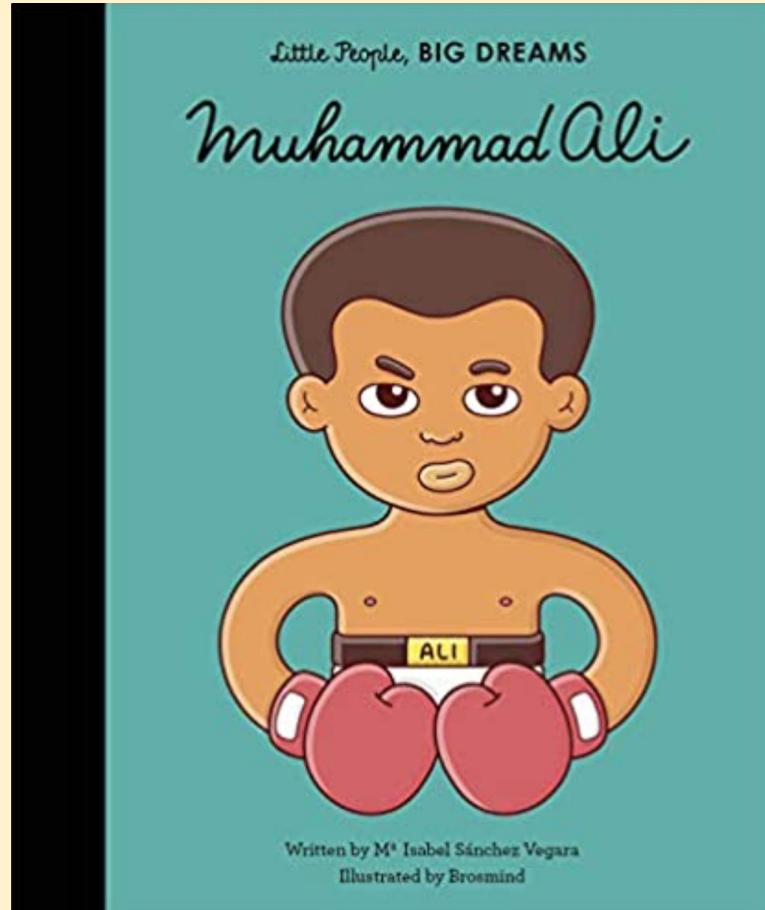
Sharing books like this is so important in empowering black children, because **we can't be what we can't see**. Black representation in books is pivotal in how black children see themselves and what they believe they are able to achieve in their lives.

Having said that, exposure to diverse representations in children's literature is **equally important for children who aren't black**. White children need to see these images and hear stories about black people and their achievements for them to develop equal respect and understanding for their black peers.

There are obviously many more books and resources to draw upon, but this list is a start. Let's get them into classrooms and into the hands of our kids!

Muhammad Ali - Little People, Big Dreams

by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara

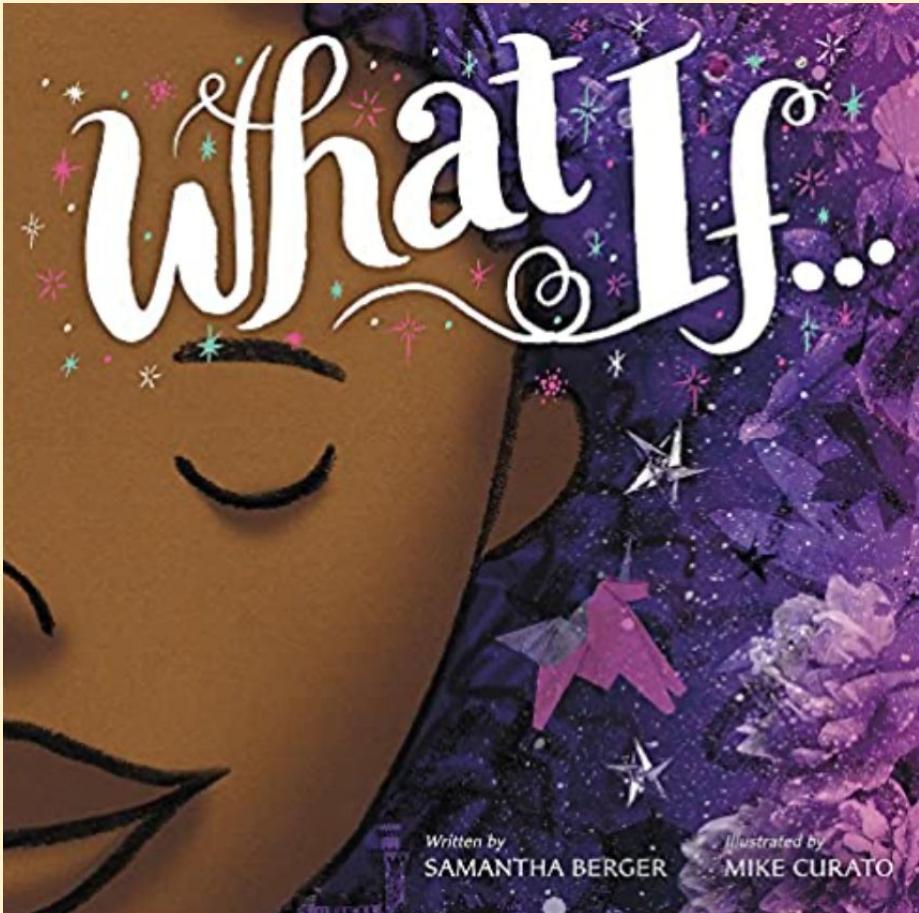


Little People, BIG DREAMS is a bestselling series of educational books that explore the lives of outstanding people, from designers and artists to scientists and activists.

When he was little, Muhammad Ali had his bicycle stolen. He wanted to fight the thief, but a policeman told him him to learn how to box first. After training hard in the gym, Muhammad developed a strong jab and an even stronger work ethic. His smart thinking and talking earned him the greatest title in boxing: Heavyweight Champion of the World. This moving book features stylish and quirky illustrations and extra facts at the back, including a biographical timeline with historical photos and a detailed profile of 'The Greatest's' life.

What If...

by Samantha Berger



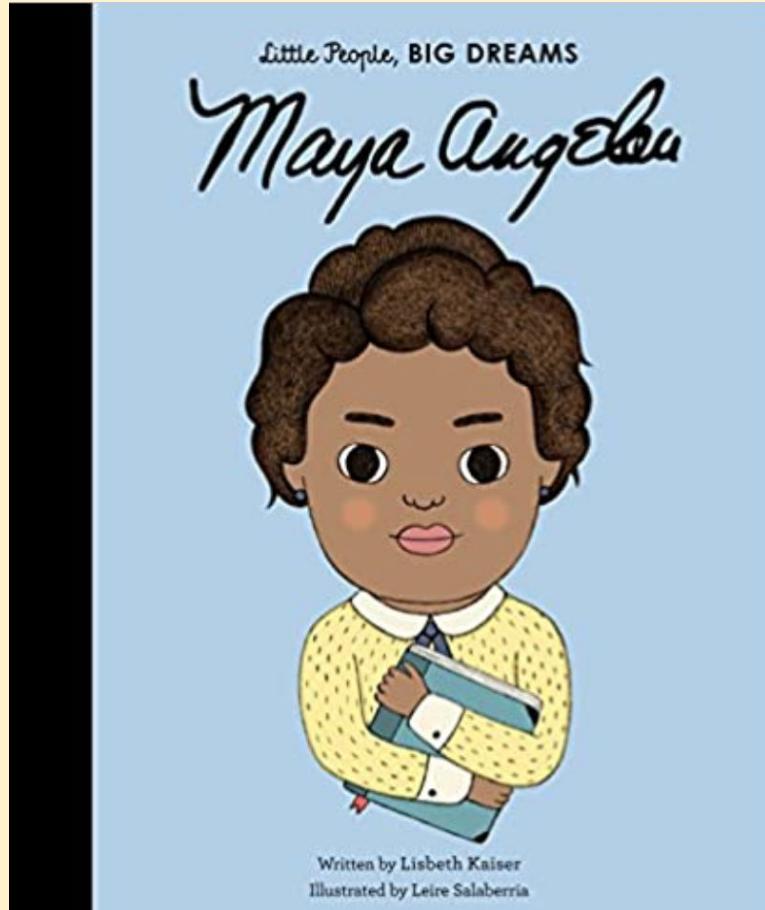
Creativity, the power of imagination, and the importance of self-expression are celebrated in this inspiring picture book written and illustrated by real-life best friends.

This girl is determined to express herself! If she can't draw her dreams, she'll sculpt or build, carve or collage. If she can't do that, she'll turn her world into a canvas. And if everything around her is taken away, she'll sing, dance, and dream...

Stunning mixed media illustrations, lyrical text, and a breath-taking gatefold conjure powerful magic in this heartfelt affirmation of art, imagination, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Maya Angelou - Little People, Big Dreams

by Lisbeth Kaiser

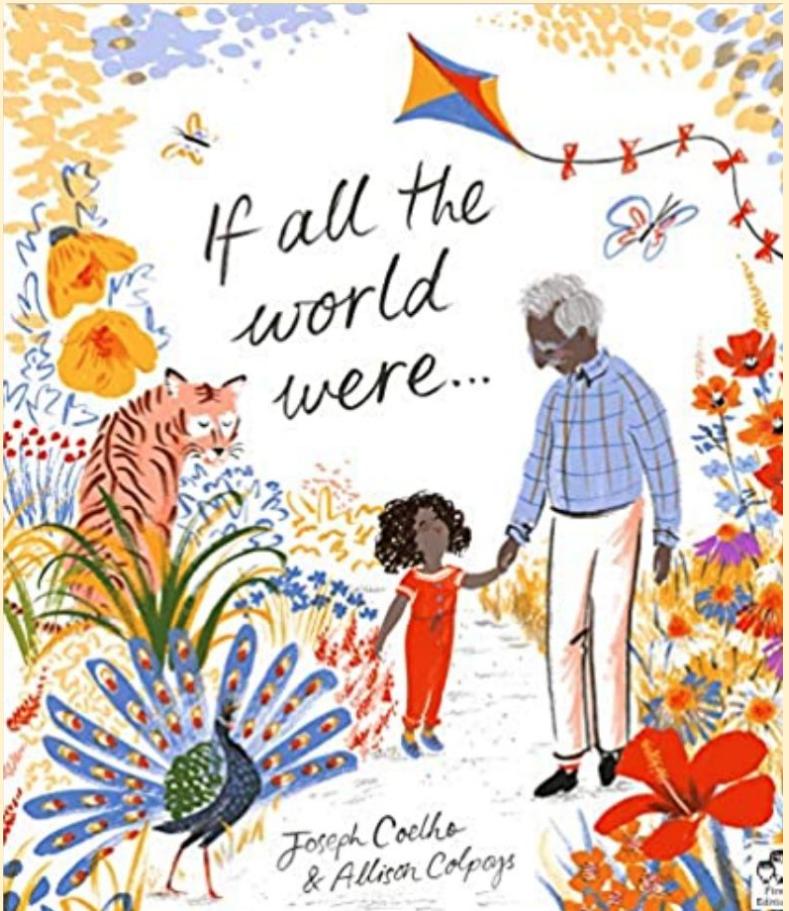


In this international bestseller from the critically acclaimed Little People, BIG DREAMS series, discover the incredible life of Maya Angelou, the powerful speaker, writer and civil rights activist.

Maya Angelou spent much of her childhood in Stamps, Arkansas. After a traumatic event at age eight, she stopped speaking for five years. However, Maya rediscovered her voice through wonderful books, and went on to become one of the world's most beloved writers and speakers.

If All The World Were...

by Joseph Coelho and Allison Colpoys



A moving, lyrical picture book about a young girl's love for her granddad and how she copes when he's gone, written by poet and playwright Joseph Coelho.

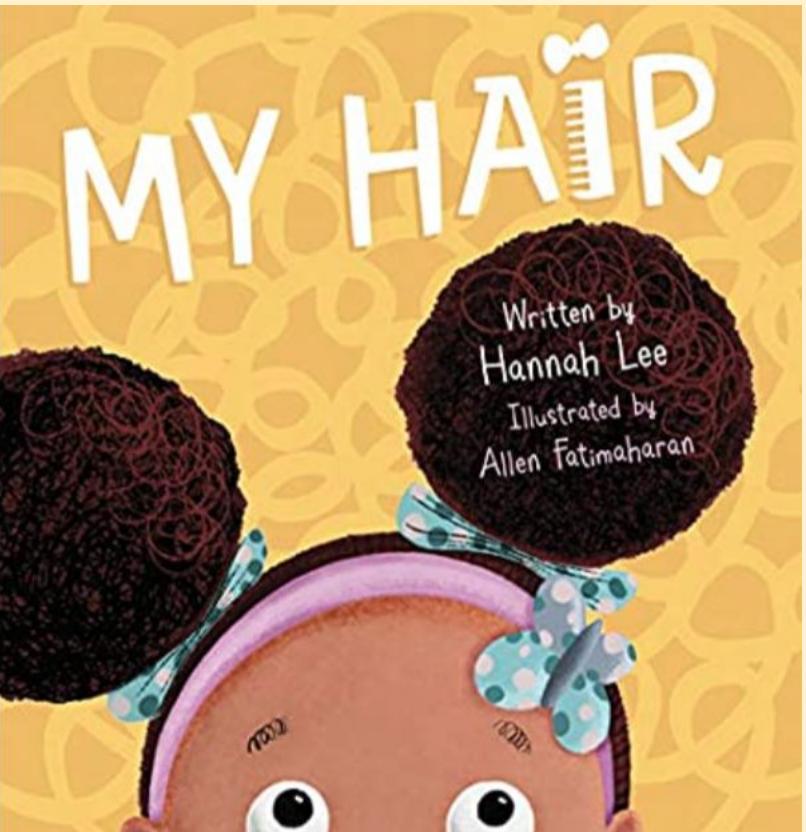
This beautifully illustrated, powerful and ultimately uplifting text is the ideal way to introduce children to the concept of death and dying, particularly children who have lost a grandparent.

With Allison Colpoys' gorgeous artwork spilling from each page, accompany a girl and her grandad over spring, summer and autumn. See how he teaches her to imagine, to create, and to enjoy the small things in life, and how, when winter comes, he lives on in her heart.

The perfect way into talking about a difficult subject with children, showing that sadness is as necessary to happiness as winter is to spring. *If All the World Were...* is a soothing, reassuring approach to loss and how to live without someone you loved, and a beautiful story, beautifully told.

My Hair

by Hannah Lee



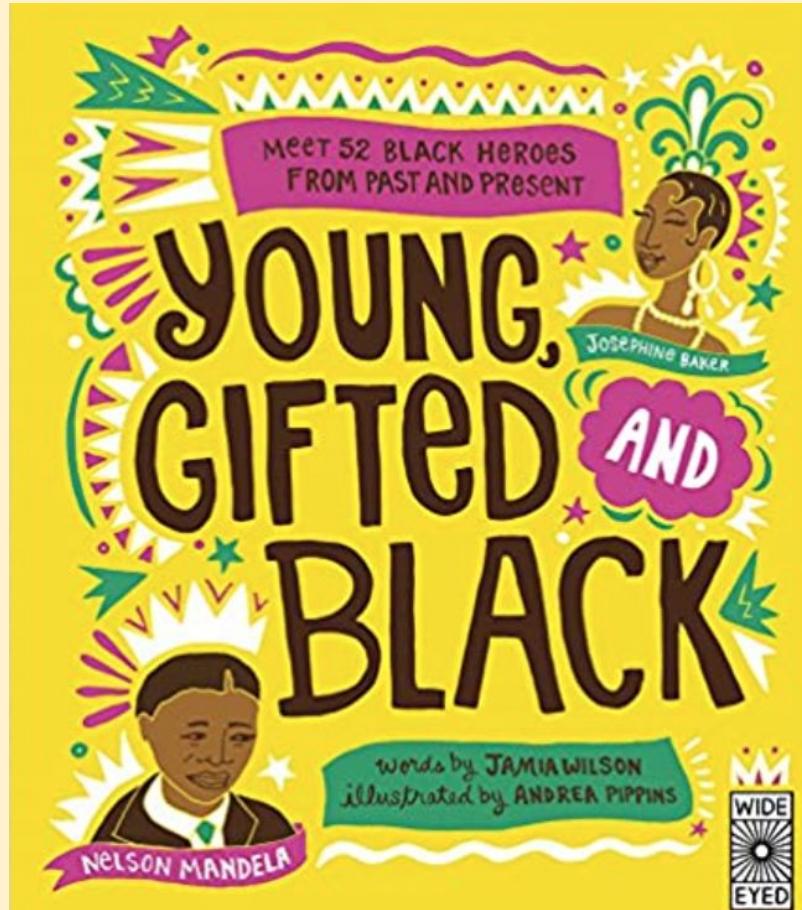
My birthday's coming up so soon,
I'll need new clothes to wear.
But most of all, I need to know,
How shall I style my hair?

Will it be dreads or a twist out? Braids or a high-top fade? Joyous and vibrant, this captures perfectly the excitement of getting ready for a celebration, as well as showcasing a dazzling array of intricate hairstyles.

This is a glorious debut from an exciting new partnership who both emerged from the FAB Prize for undiscovered BAME writers and illustrators.

Young, Gifted and Black

by Jamia Wilson



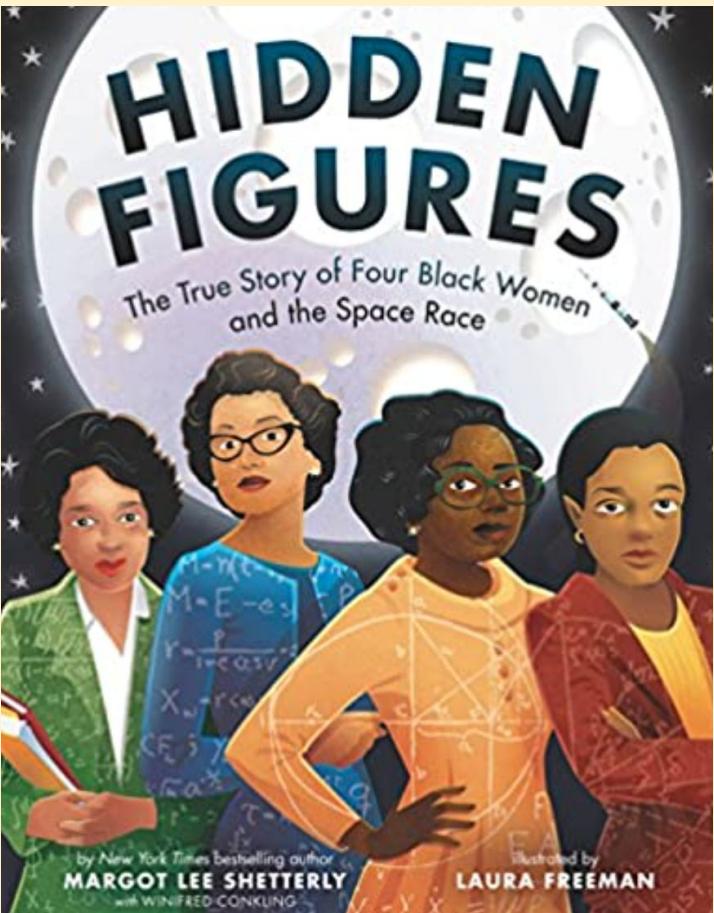
Meet 52 icons of colour from the past and present in this celebration of inspirational achievement – a collection of stories about changemakers to encourage, inspire and empower the next generation of changemakers. Jamia Wilson has carefully curated this range of black icons and the book is stylishly brought together by Andrea Pippins' colourful and celebratory illustrations.

Written in the spirit of Nina Simone's song "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black," this vibrant book is a perfect introduction to both historic and present-day icons and heroes. Meet figureheads, leaders and pioneers such as Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and Rosa Parks, as well as cultural trailblazers and athletes like Stevie Wonder, Oprah Winfrey and Serena Williams.

All children deserve to see themselves represented positively in the books they read. Highlighting the talent and contributions of black leaders and changemakers from around the world, readers of all backgrounds will be empowered to discover what they too can achieve. Strong, courageous, talented and diverse, these extraordinary men and women's achievements will inspire a new generation to chase their dream... whatever it may be.

Hidden Figures

by Margot Lee Shetterly



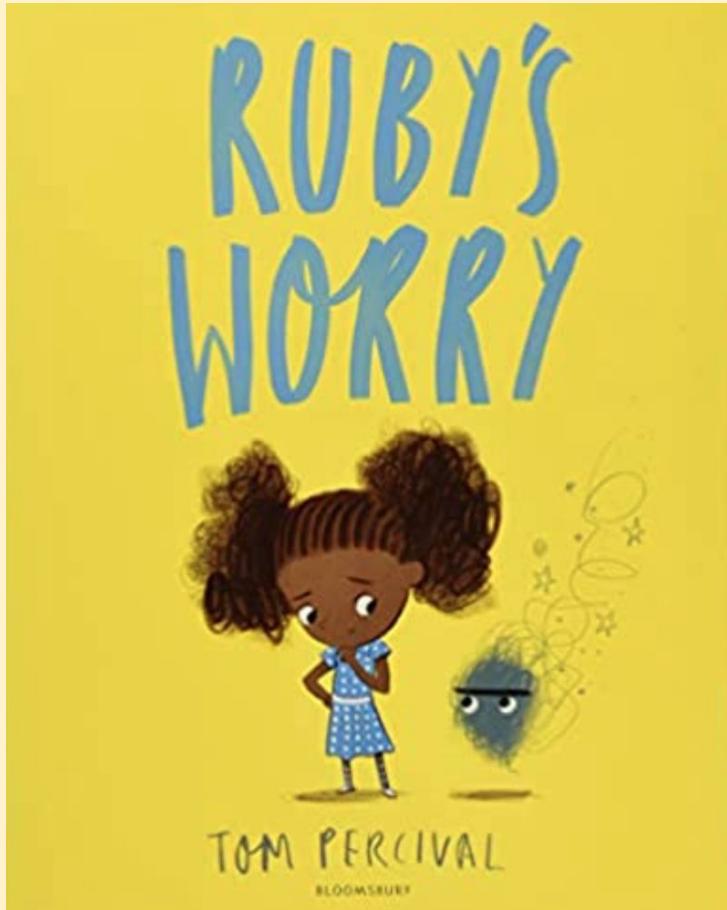
Based on the *New York Times* bestselling book and the Academy Award-nominated movie, author Margot Lee Shetterly and Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Award winner Laura Freeman bring the incredibly inspiring true story of four black women who helped NASA launch men into space to picture book readers! Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden were good at maths...*really* good.

They participated in some of NASA's greatest successes, like providing the calculations for America's first journeys into space. And they did so during a time when being black and a woman limited what they could do. But they worked hard. They persisted. And they used their genius minds to change the world.

In this beautifully illustrated picture book edition, we explore the story of four female African American mathematicians at NASA, known as "coloured computers," and how they overcame gender and racial barriers to succeed in a highly challenging STEM-based career.

Ruby's Worry

by Tom Percival

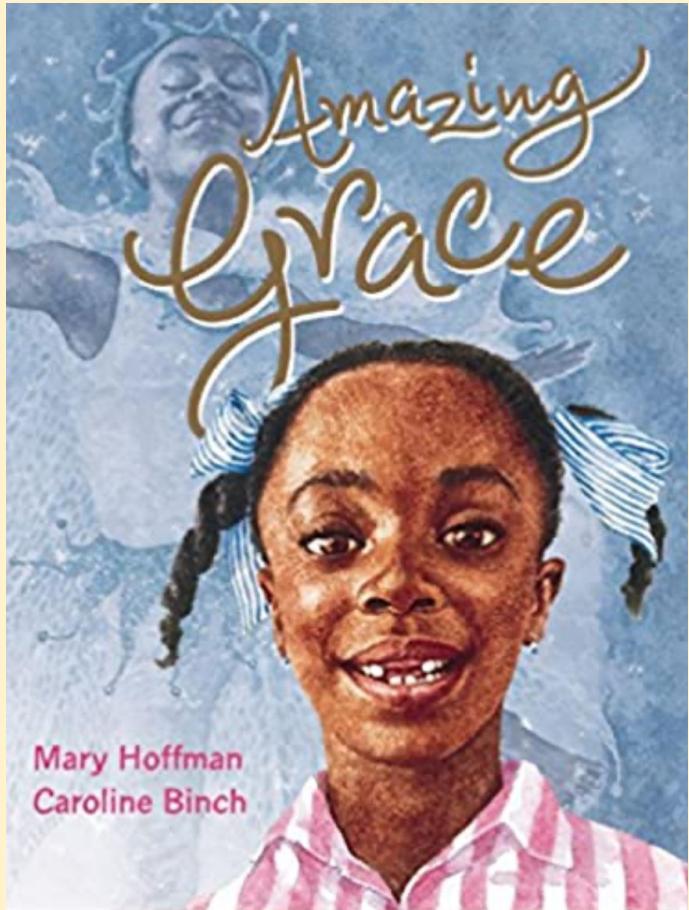


Ruby loves being Ruby. Until, one day, she finds a worry. At first, it's not such a big worry, and that's all right, but then it starts to grow. It gets bigger and bigger every day and it makes Ruby sad. How can Ruby get rid of it and feel like herself again?

A perceptive and poignant story that is a must-have for all children's bookshelves. From Tom Percival's bestselling Big Bright Feelings series, this is the perfect book for discussing childhood worries and anxieties, no matter how big or small they may be.

Amazing grace

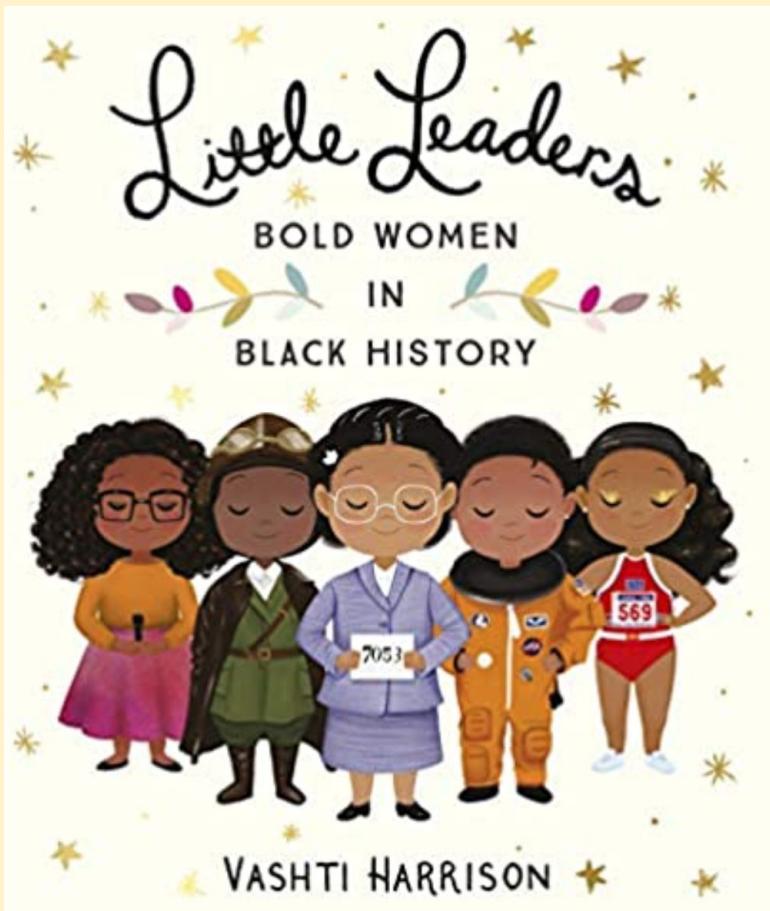
by Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch



Grace loves to act out stories. Sometimes she plays the leading part, sometimes she is 'a cast of thousands.' When her school decides to perform *Peter Pan*, Grace is longing to play Peter, but her classmates say that Peter was a boy, and besides, he wasn't black... But Grace's Ma and Nana tell her she can be anything she wants if she puts her mind to it...

Little Leaders: Bold Women In Black History

by Vashti Harrison



I made up my mind to try. I tried and I was successful. -
Bessie Coleman

Meet the little leaders. They're brave. They're bold. They changed the world.

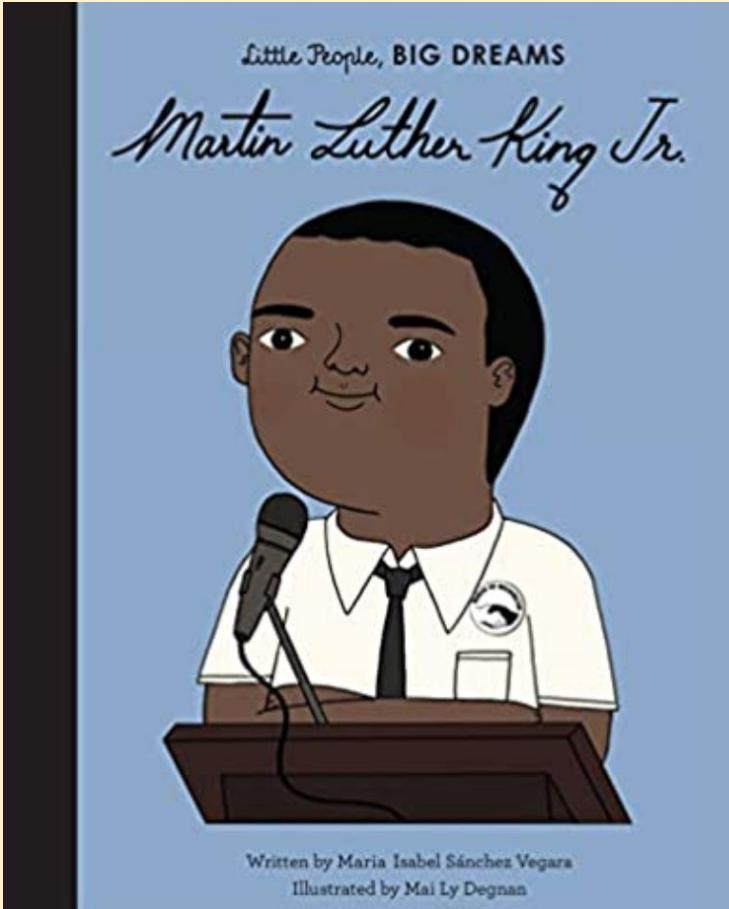
Did you know the treatment for leprosy was developed by a young scientist called Alice Ball? And Josephine Baker- world famous cabaret singer and dancer- was also a spy for the French résistance?

Featuring 40 trailblazing black women in the world's history, this book educates and inspires as it relates true stories of women who broke boundaries and exceeded all expectations.

Debut author/illustrator Vashti Harrison pairs captivating text with stunning illustrations as she tells the stories of both iconic and lesser-known female figures of black history

Martin Luther King Jr - Little People, Big Dreams

by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara

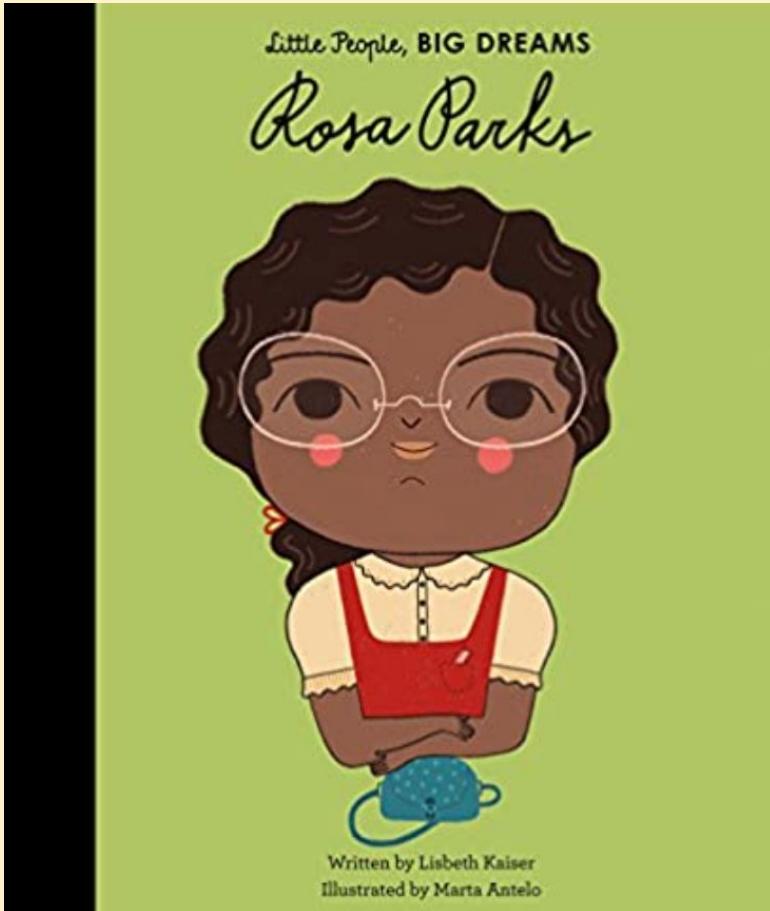


In this book from the critically acclaimed, multimillion-copy bestselling Little People, BIG DREAMS series, discover the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., the inspiring minister and civil rights activist.

Little Martin grew up in a family of preachers: his dad was a preacher, his uncle was a preacher, his grandfather was a preacher... so maybe he'd become a great preacher too. One day, a friend invited him to play at his house. Martin was shocked when his mother wouldn't let him in because he was black. That day he realized there was something terribly unfair going on. Martin believed that no one should remain silent and accept something if it's wrong. And he promised himself that – when he grew up – he'd fight injustice with the most powerful weapon of all: words. This moving book features stylish and quirky illustrations and extra facts at the back, including a biographical timeline with historical photos and a detailed profile of the inspiring activist's life.

Rosa Parks - Little People, Big Dreams

by Lisbeth Kaiser

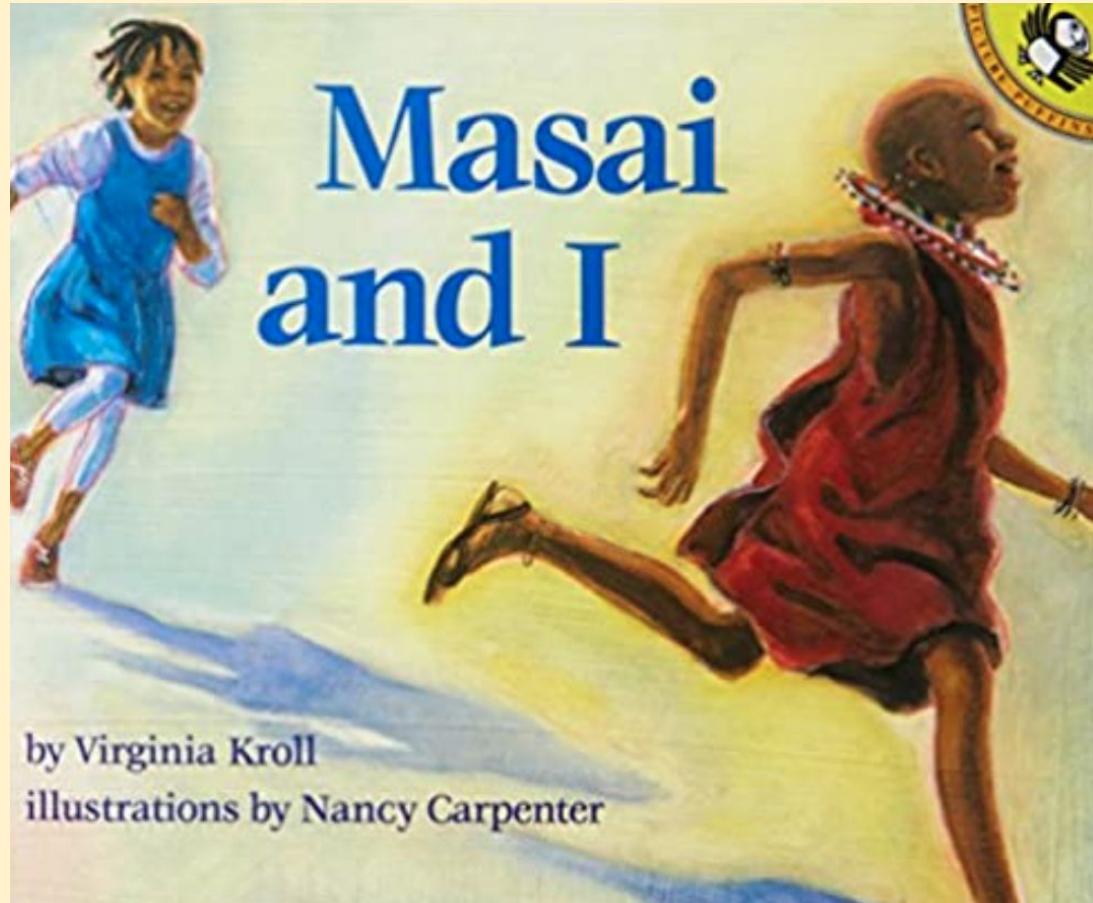


In this book from the highly acclaimed Little People, BIG DREAMS series, discover the incredible life of Rosa Parks, the 'Mother of the Freedom Movement.'

Rosa Parks grew up in Alabama, where she learned to stand up for herself at an early age. Rosa went on to become a civil rights activist. In 1955, she refused to give up her seat to a white man on a segregated bus, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Her courageous decision had a huge impact on civil rights, eventually leading to the end of segregation on public transport. She never stopped working for equal rights. This moving book features stylish and quirky illustrations and extra facts at the back, including a biographical timeline with historical photos and a detailed profile of the activist's life.

Masai and I

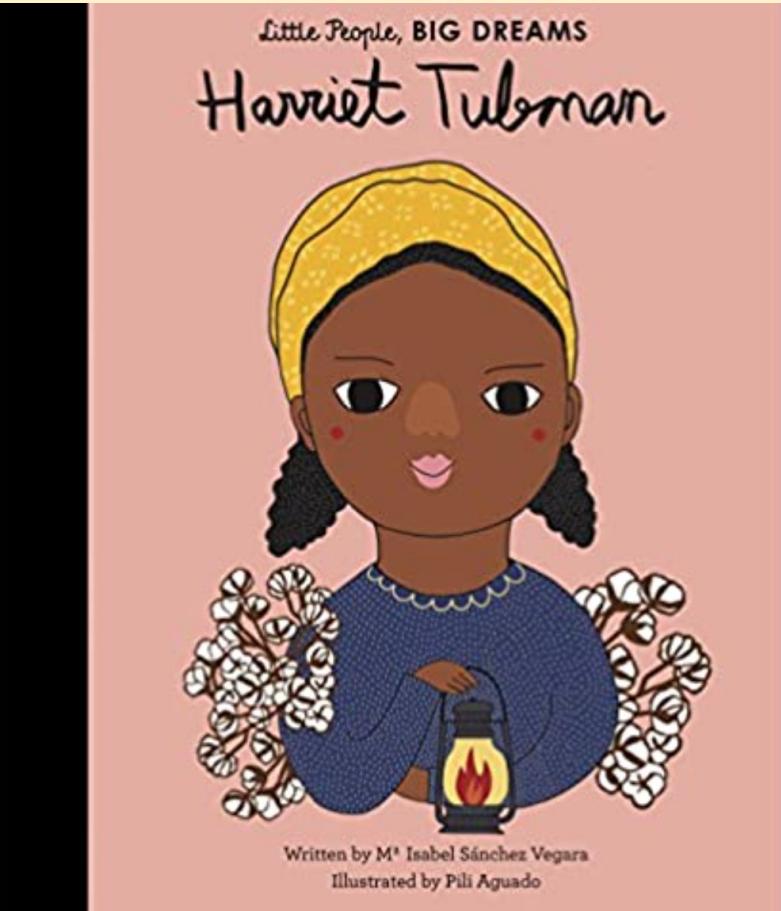
by Virginia Kroll



A little girl learns about the Kenyan Masai tribe at school and daydreams about what her life would have been like if she had been born into the tall, proud East African tribe. Comparing her life and theirs, she celebrates both the differences and the similarities and she learns that she has her own spiritual and even physical kinship with them.

Harriet Tubman - Little People, Big Dreams

by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara

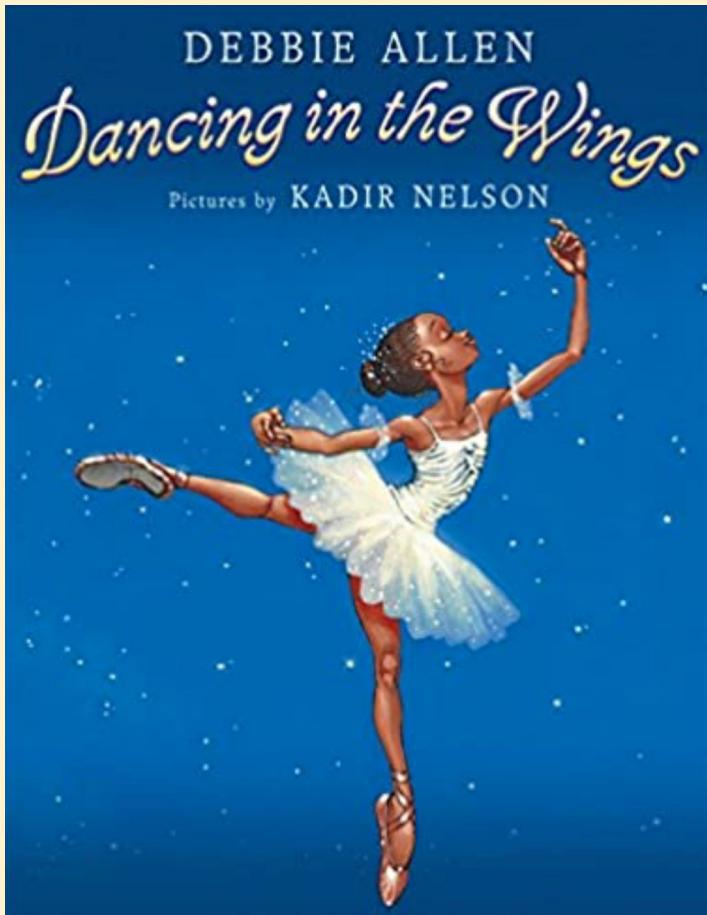


Part of the critically acclaimed Little People, BIG DREAMS series, discover the incredible life of Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad conductor who 'never lost a single passenger.'

Little Harriet was born into slavery on a plantation in Maryland. Though life was hard, Harriet persisted. She used all of her strength and bravery to escape slavery and journey north on the Underground Railroad. Harriet made the dangerous mission back to the South many times, fighting her whole life to bring others with her to freedom. This moving book features stylish and quirky illustrations and extra facts at the back, including a biographical timeline with historical photos and a detailed profile of the abolitionist's life.

Dancing In the Wings

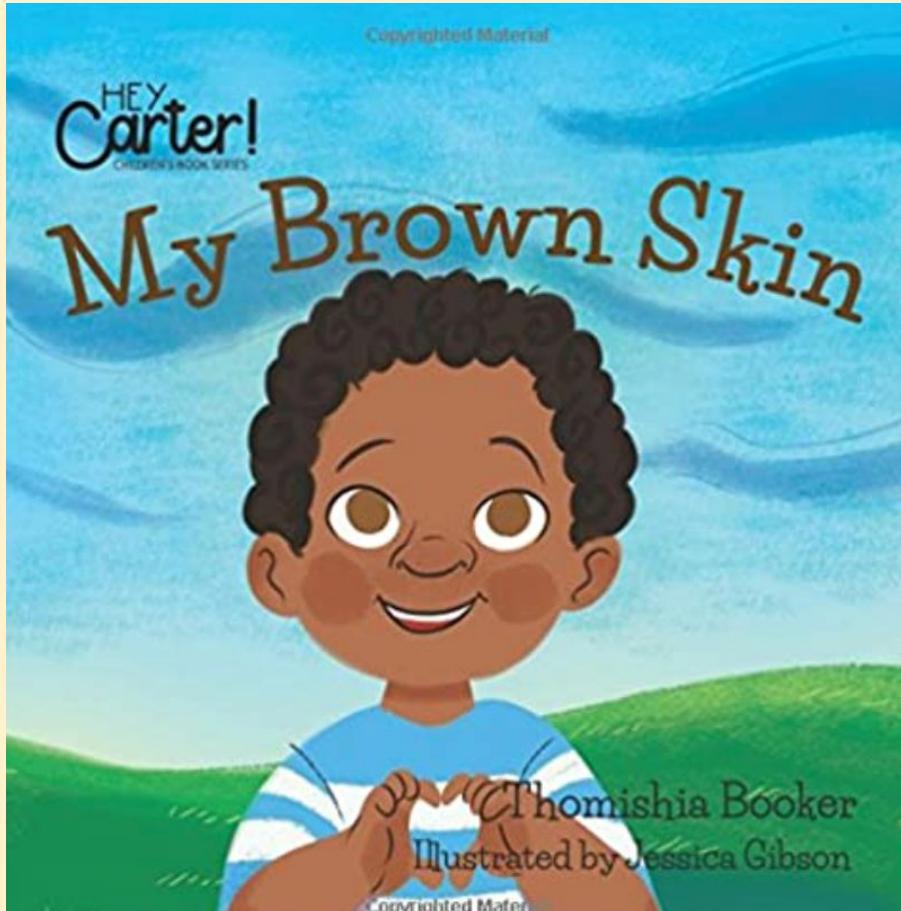
by Debbie Allen



Sassy is a long-legged girl who always has something to say. She wants to be a ballerina more than anything, but she worries that her too-large feet, too-long legs, and even her big mouth will keep her from her dream. When a famous director comes to visit her class, Sassy does her best to get his attention with her high jumps and bright leotard. Her first attempts are definitely not appreciated, but with Sassy's persistence, she just might be able to win him over. *Dancing in the Wings* is loosely based on actress/choreographer Debbie Allen's own experiences as a young dancer.

My Brown Skin

by Thomishia Brooker

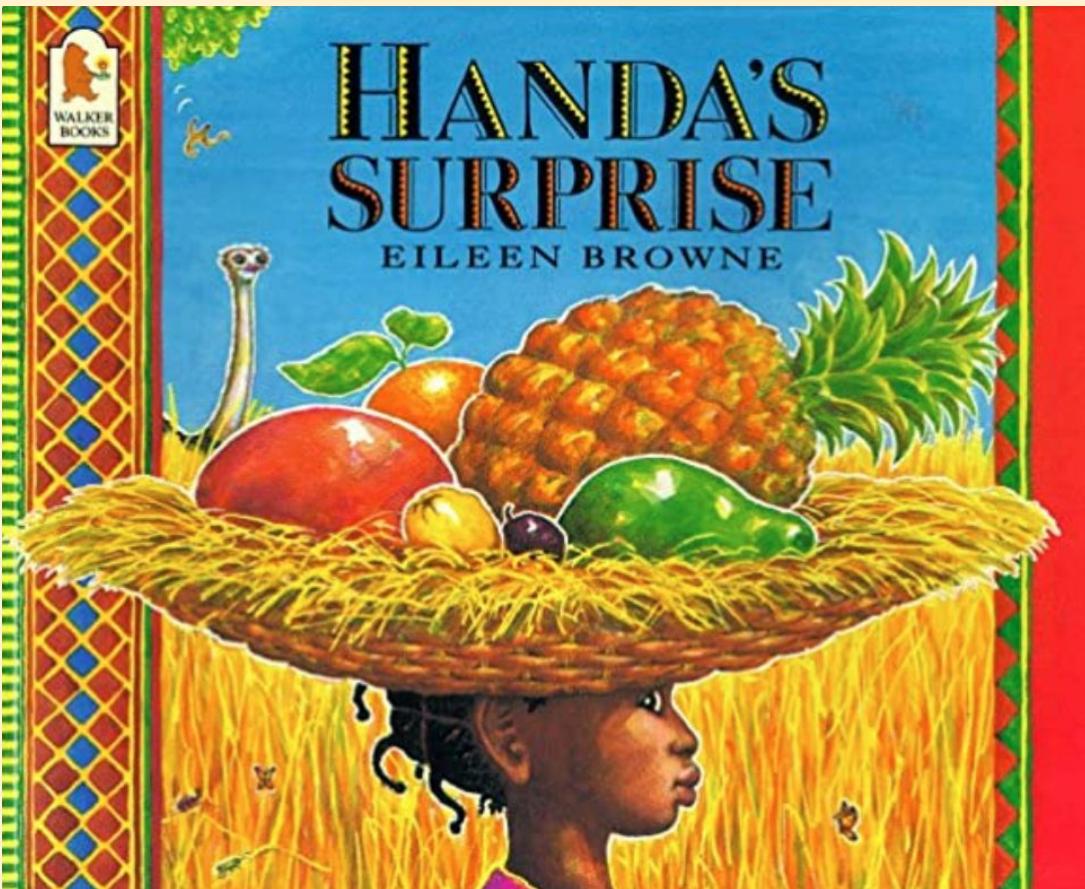


This book is great for EYFS children and teaches diversity from an early age.

This book reinforces that our children deserve respect. We must remind our children that they are powerful and amazing. "My Brown Skin" is a heart-warming story about embracing who you are. A child's first words of confidence and pride.

Handa's Surprise

by Eileen Browne



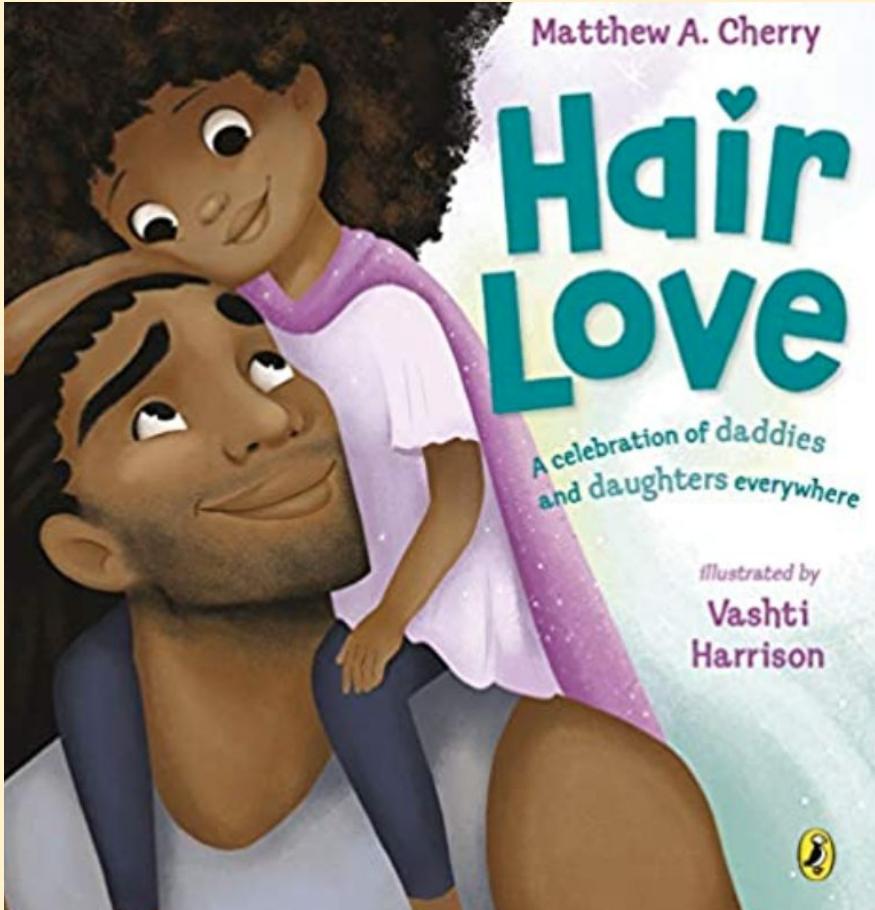
In this picture book classic, a delightful surprise colourfully unfolds when a little girl called Handa puts seven delicious fruits in a basket to take to her friend.

A modern classic named one of the best culturally diverse picture books in the UK, this is the story of Handa, who's part of the Luo tribe in south-west Kenya. Handa decides to take seven pieces of delicious fruit to her friend, Akeyo, who lives in the neighbouring village. But as Akeyo wonders, *I wonder what fruit Akeyo will like best?*, a series of sneaky animals steal something from Handa's basket, which she's carrying on her head... When Handa reaches Akeyo, will she have anything left to offer her friend?

Richly-illustrated, brimming with luscious fruit and cheeky wild animals, this mouth-watering story is for the youngest of readers. In the best pantomime spirit, children will long to tell Handa what's happening right behind her!

Hair Love

by Matthew A. Cherry



Based on the Oscar winning short film!

It's up to Daddy to give his daughter an extra-special hair style in this story of self-confidence and the love between fathers and daughters.

Zuri knows her hair is beautiful, but it has a mind of its own!

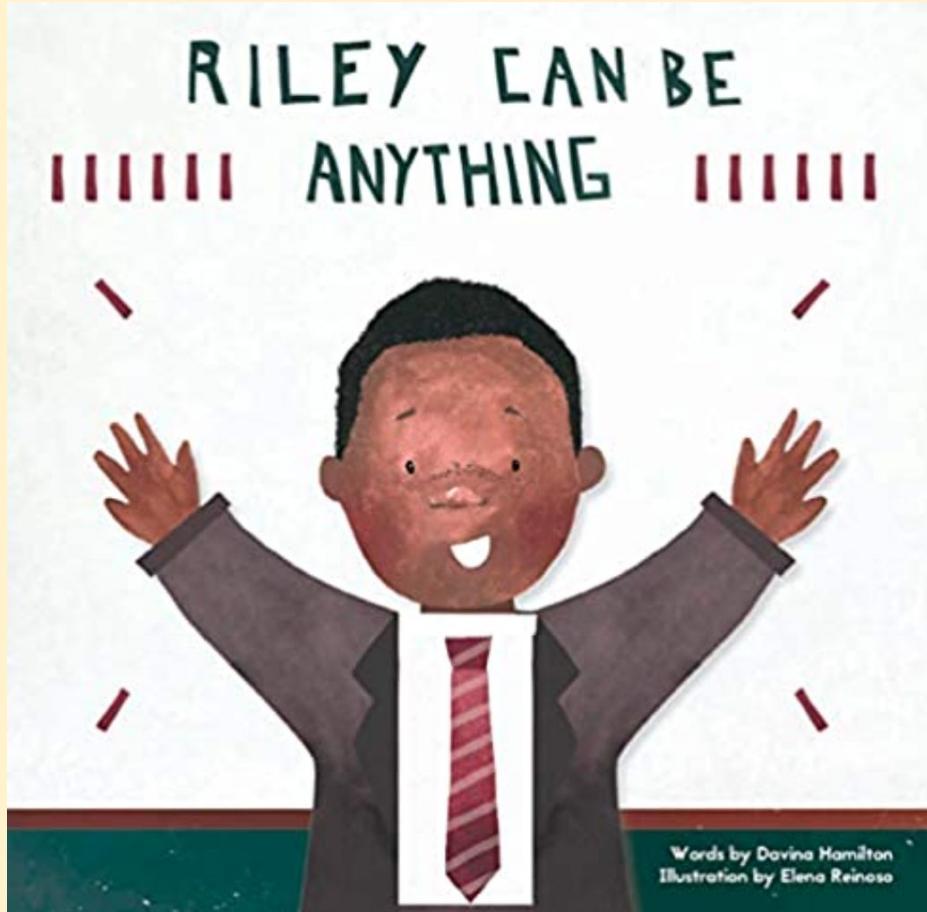
It kinks, coils, and curls every which way. Mum always does Zuri's hair just the way she likes it - so when Daddy steps in to style it for an extra special occasion, he has a lot to learn.

But he LOVES his Zuri, and he'll do anything to make her - and her hair - happy.

Tender and empowering, *Hair Love* is an ode to loving your natural hair - and a celebration of daddies and daughters everywhere.

Riley Can Be Anything

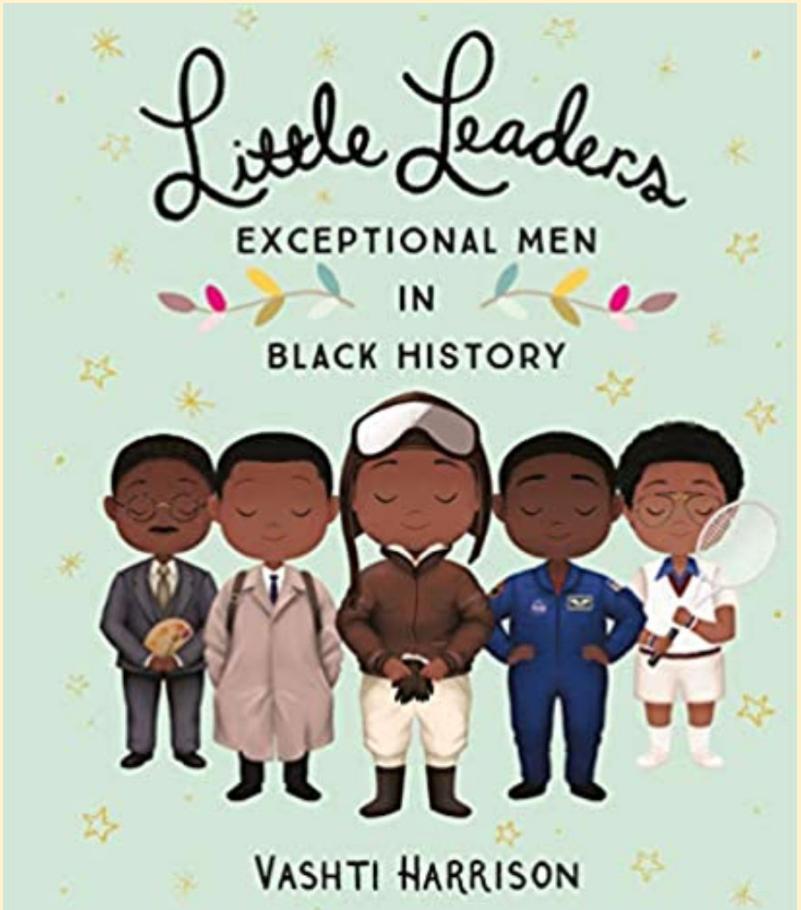
by Davina Hamilton



The inspiring rhyming story follows Riley as he discovers some of the wonderful things he can do when he grows up. With the help of his big cousin Joe, Riley is taken on a series of imaginative journeys that allow him to realise he can be anything he wants to be.

Little Leaders: Exceptional Men In Black History

by Vashti Harrison



Meet the little leaders. They're brave. They're exceptional. They changed the world.

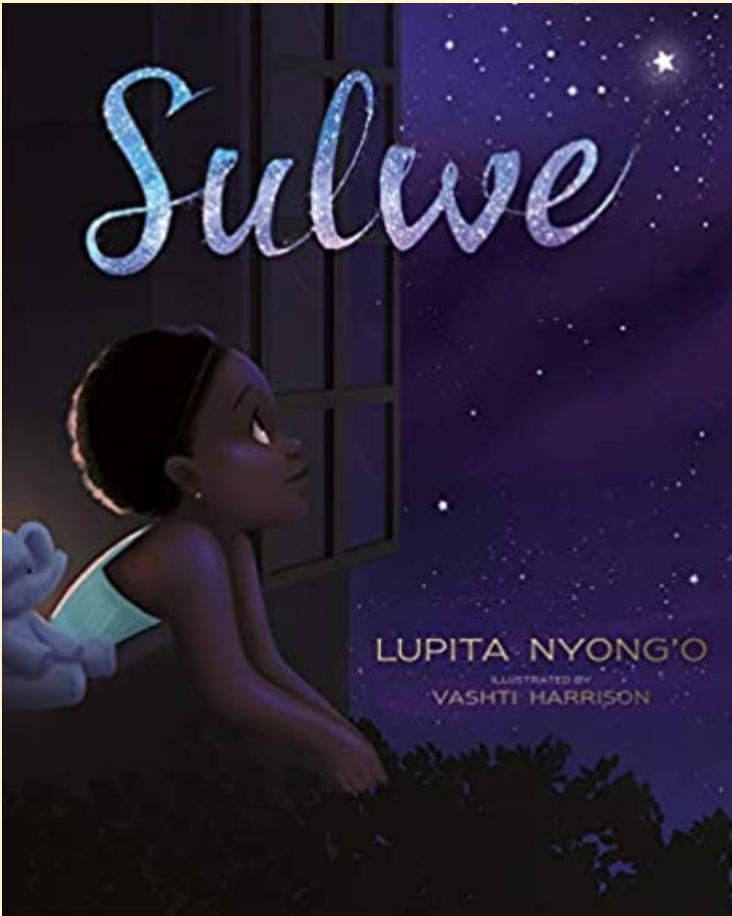
Did you know that the father of African cinema was originally a bricklayer? Or that Vogue's editor-at-large read his first Vogue magazine in his local library?

Learn all about the exceptional black men who broke barriers and fought injustice to realise their dreams and make the world a better place.

With Vashti Harrison's beautiful illustrations and illuminating writing, discover the stories of black men from all walks of life.

Sulwe

by Lupita Nyong'o



From Academy Award-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o comes a powerful, moving picture book about colourism, self-esteem and learning that true beauty comes from within.

Sulwe's skin is the colour of midnight. She's darker than everyone in her family, and everyone at school.

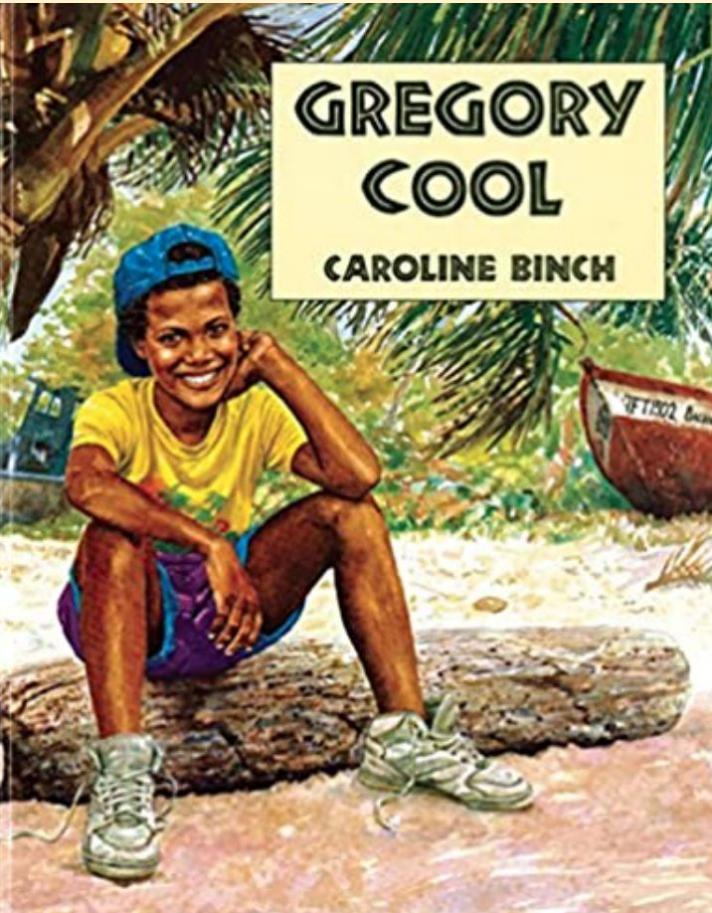
All she wants is to be beautiful and bright, like her mother and sister.

Then a magical journey through the night sky opens her eyes and changes everything.

In this stunning debut picture book, Lupita Nyong'o creates a whimsical and heartwarming story to inspire children to see their own unique beauty.

Gregory Cool

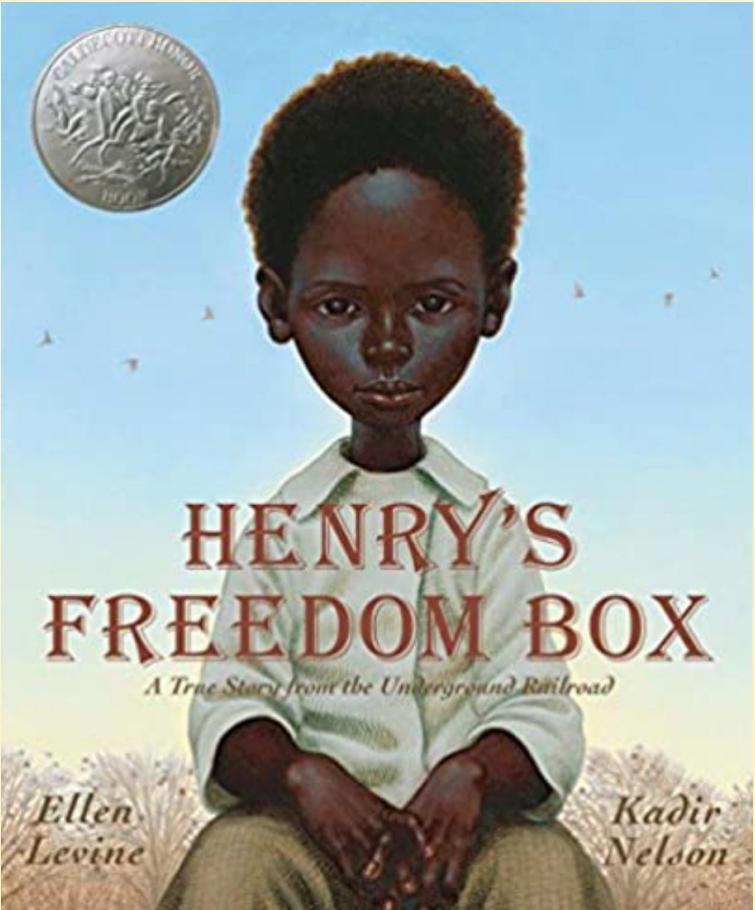
by Caroline Binch



When Gregory wakes up on his first day in Tobago with his grandparents, his heart sinks. The food is strange, the sun too hot, his cousin Lennox is on another wavelength, and there are none of the televisions, video games and other high-tech gadgets that a cool city-boy takes for granted. How will Gregory adjust to the strange culture? And will he learn to enjoy the lifestyle of the Caribbean?

Henry's Freedom Box

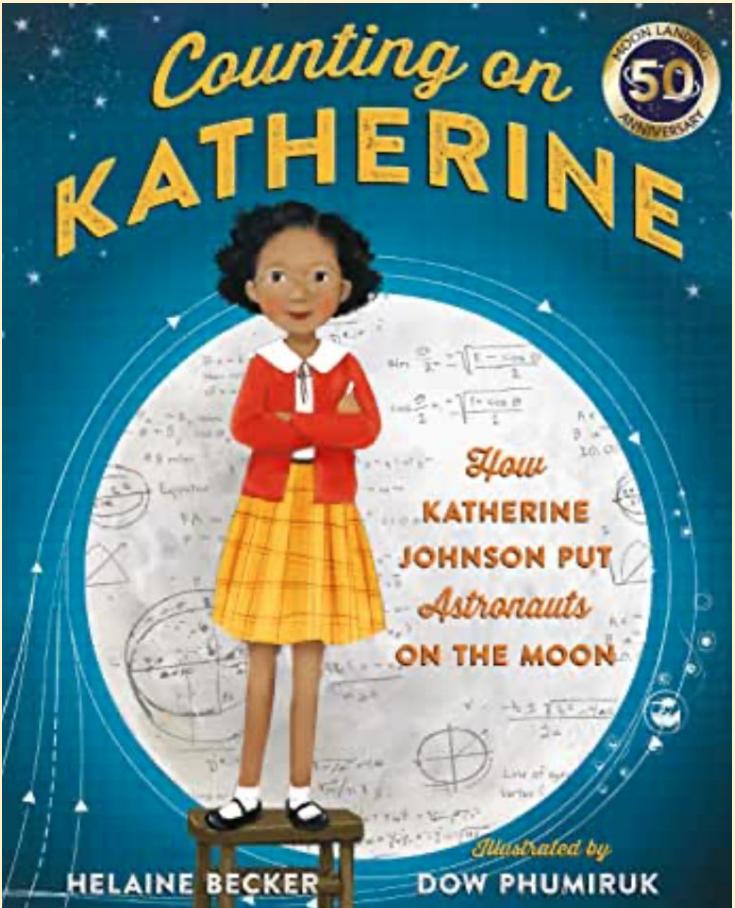
by Ellen Levine and Kadir Nelson



A stirring, dramatic story of a slave who mails himself to freedom by a Jane Addams Peace Award-winning author and a Coretta Scott King Award-winning artist. Henry Brown doesn't know how old he is. Nobody keeps records of slaves' birthdays. All the time he dreams about freedom, but that dream seems farther away than ever when he is torn from his family and put to work in a warehouse. Henry grows up and marries, but he is again devastated when his family is sold at the slave market. Then one day, as he lifts a crate at the warehouse, he knows exactly what he must do: He will mail himself to the North. After an arduous journey in the crate, Henry finally has a birthday -- his first day of freedom.

Counting on Katherine

by Helaine Becker



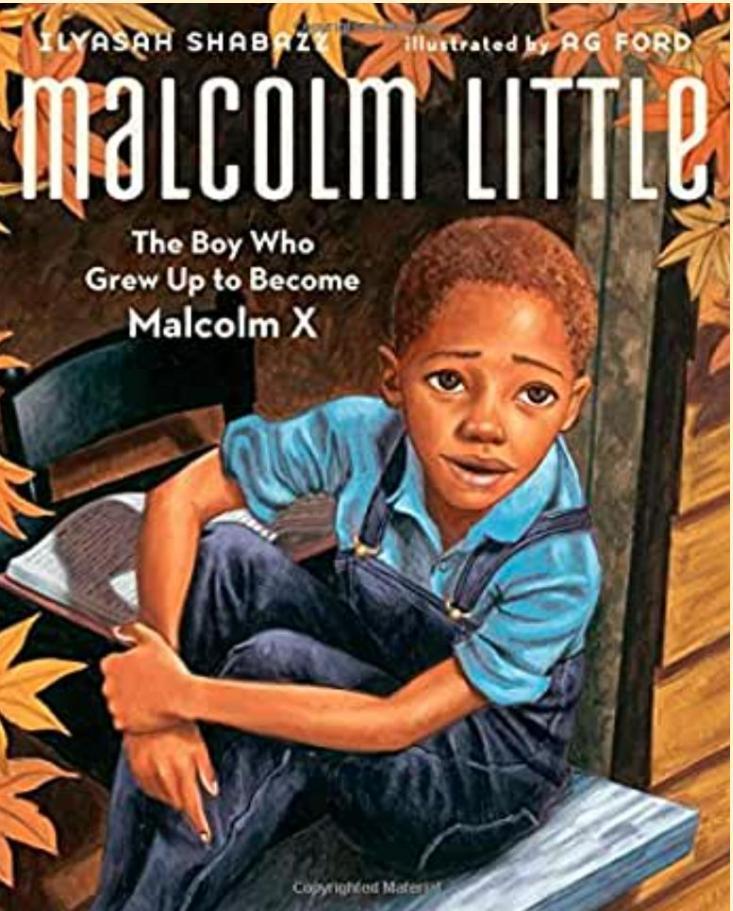
Katherine Johnson is the mathematical genius who helped make the historic Apollo 11 moon landings possible and made sure that Apollo 13 returned home safely when the mission was in critical danger.

As a child, Katherine loved to count. She counted the steps on the road, the number of dishes and spoons she washed in the kitchen sink, everything! Boundless, curious, and excited by calculations, young Katherine longed to know as much as she could about maths, about the universe . . .

Helaine Becker interviewed Katherine and her family for this authorized biography. From Katherine's early beginnings as a gifted student to her heroic accomplishments as a prominent mathematician at NASA, this is the true story of a groundbreaking African-American woman who went above and beyond what was expected of her in the 1960s, saving lives and making enormous contributions to history. Featuring Dow Phumiruk's gorgeous full-colour illustrations throughout.

Malcolm Little

by Ilyasah Shabazz



Malcolm X grew to be one of America's most influential figures. But first, he was a boy named Malcolm Little. Written by his daughter, this inspiring picture book biography celebrates a vision of freedom and justice. Bolstered by the love and wisdom of his large, warm family, young Malcolm Little was a natural born leader. But when confronted with intolerance and a series of tragedies, Malcolm's optimism and faith were threatened. He had to learn how to be strong and how to hold on to his individuality. He had to learn self-reliance.

Together with acclaimed illustrator AG Ford, Ilyasah Shabazz gives us a unique glimpse into the childhood of her father, Malcolm X, with a lyrical story that carries a message that resonates still today--that we must all strive to live to our highest potential.

Let The Children March

by Monica Clark-Robinson



I couldn't play on the same playground as the white kids.

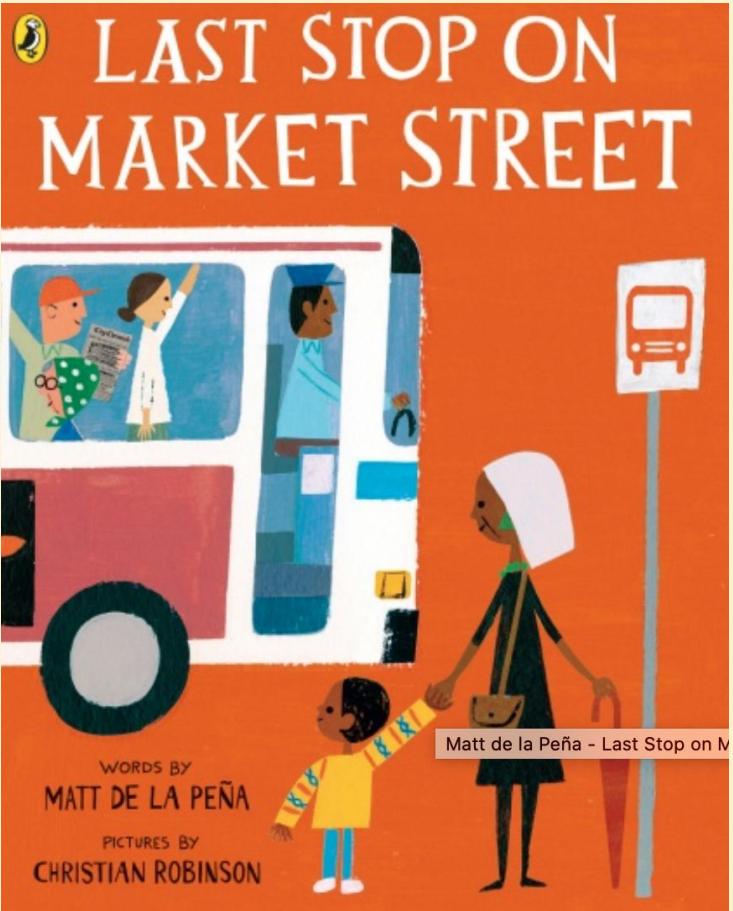
I couldn't go to their schools.

*I couldn't drink from their water fountains.
There were so many things I couldn't do.*

In 1963 Birmingham, Alabama, thousands of African American children volunteered to march for their civil rights after hearing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak. They protested the laws that kept black people separate from white people. Facing fear, hate, and danger, these children used their voices to change the world. Frank Morrison's emotive oil-on-canvas paintings bring this historical event to life, while Monica Clark-Robinson's moving and poetic words document this remarkable time.

Last Stop On Market Street

by Matt De La Peña



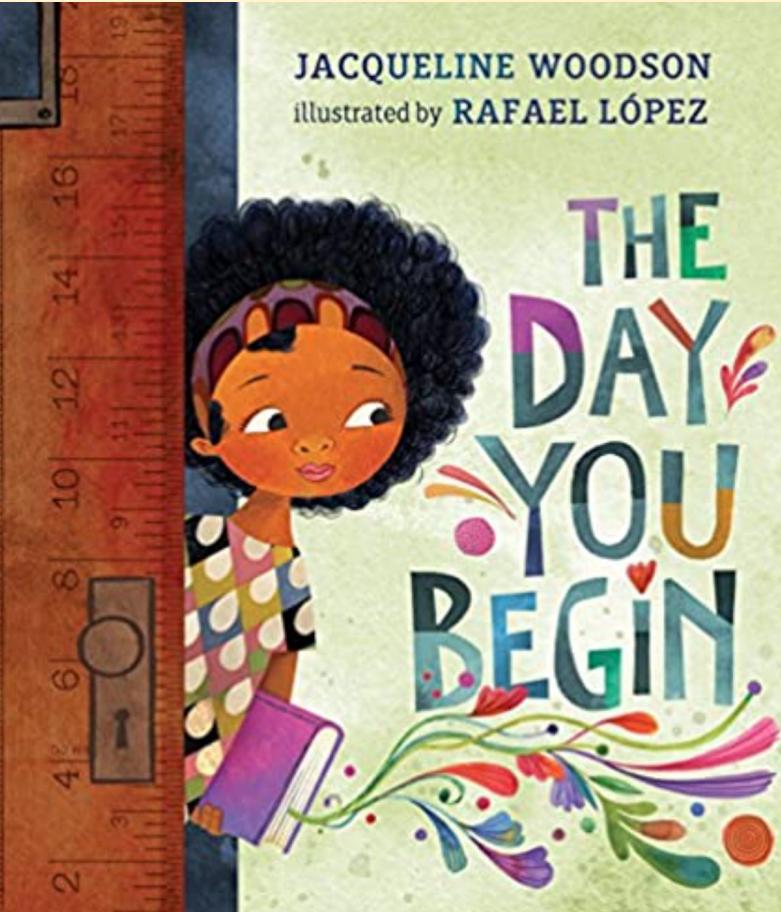
Sometimes when you're surrounded by dirt, CJ, you're a better witness for what's beautiful."

CJ begins his weekly bus journey around the city with disappointment and dissatisfaction, wondering why he and his family can't drive a car like his friends. Through energy and encouragement, CJ's nana helps him see the beauty and fun in their routine.

This beautifully illustrated, emotive picture book explores urban life with honesty, interest and gratitude.

The Day You Begin

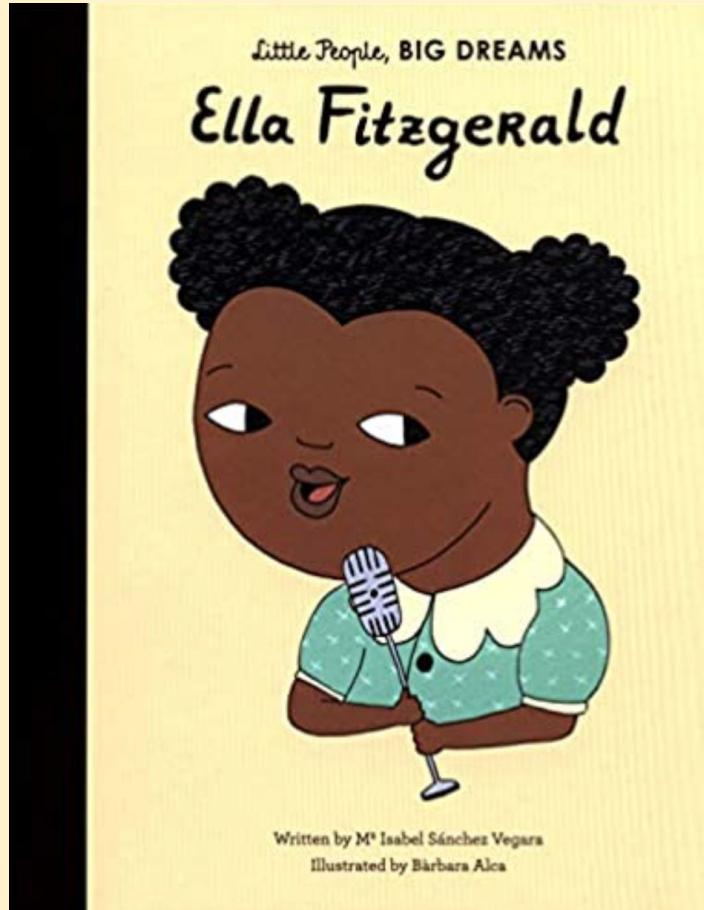
by Jacqueline Woodson



There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you. There are many reasons to feel different. Maybe it's how you look or talk, or where you're from; maybe it's what you eat, or something just as random. It's not easy to take those first steps into a place where nobody really knows you yet, but somehow you do it. Jacqueline Woodson's lyrical text and Rafael Lopez's dazzling art reminds us that we all feel like outsiders sometimes and how brave it is that we go forth anyway. And that sometimes, when we reach out and begin to share our stories, others will be happy to meet us halfway.

Ella Fitzgerald - Little People, Big Dreams

by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara

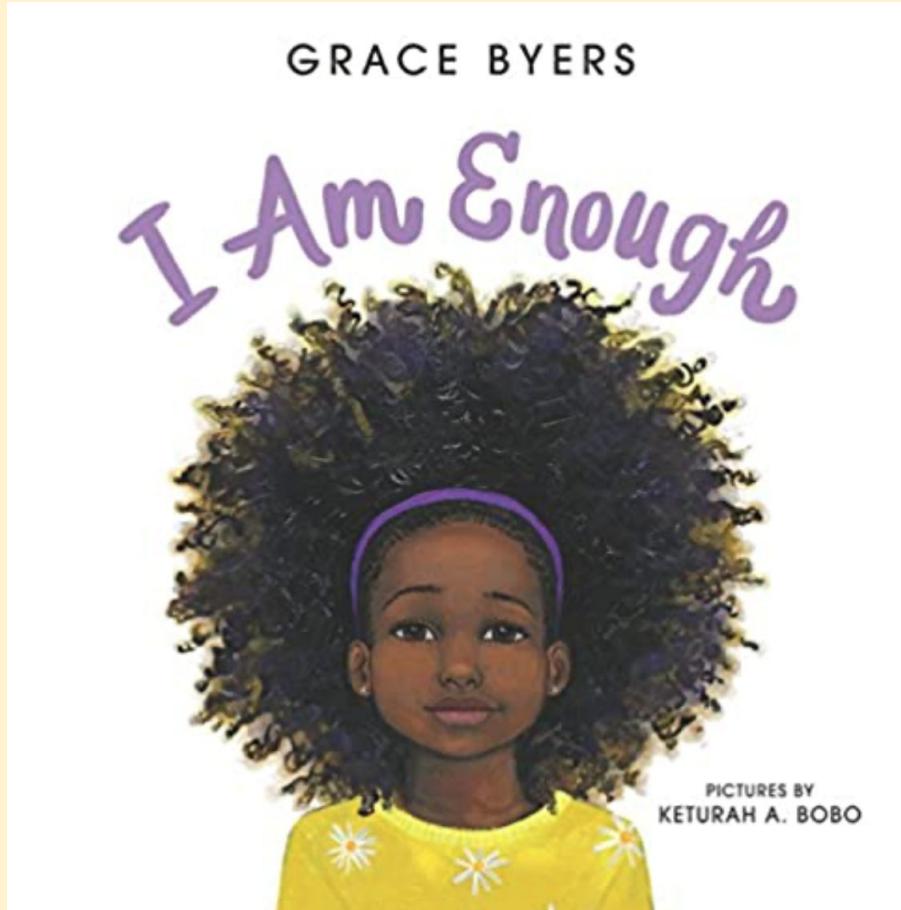


Meet Ella Fitzgerald, one of the most influential jazz singers of all time! Part of the beloved Little People, BIG DREAMS series, this inspiring and informative little biography follows the inspirational life of the First Lady of Song, from her early singing days on the streets of Harlem to her success as a jazz legend, with the message: 'It's not where you come from, but where you're going that counts.'

Ella Fitzgerald grew up near Harlem, in New York, where she was surrounded by music and dance. After winning first prize in a talent competition at the Apollo Theater, she went on to tour the world with her pioneering voice. This moving book features stylish and quirky illustrations and extra facts at the back, including a biographical timeline with historical photos and a detailed profile of the singer's life.

I Am Enough

by Grace Byers



This gorgeous, lyrical ode to loving who you are, respecting others, and being kind to one another comes from *Empire* actor and activist Grace Byers and talented newcomer artist Keturah A. Bobo.

We are all here for a purpose. We are more than enough. We just need to believe it.