



Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Families,

Black History Month

In England, Black History Month was first celebrated in October 1987 as an opportunity to recognise the contributions of African and Caribbean people to life in Britain. People from these communities have been a fundamental part of British history for centuries. However, their value and contribution to society has been often overlooked, ignored, or distorted. Therefore, the aim of Black History Month is to recognise and understand the diverse contributions of these communities and to promote an appreciation of diversity through a broad education about the past.

Robert Smyth Academy has a strong commitment to Black History Month.

To meet this aim, we have carefully planned our curriculum to give students meaningful opportunities to learn about the importance of Black History Month and associated societal issues, in October.

In a school with such a vibrant and thriving curriculum taught by so many brilliant and creative teachers, it is almost impossible to capture every opportunity that our students will have but these are a few examples:

- **All students will participate in PSHE lessons with their Form Tutor about Black History Month.**
- **Media interpretations of the contributions of black communities to modern Britain.**
- **Examples of significant black people from the worlds of politics, sport, music, business, the arts, and the military.**
- **Key Stage 3 and GCSE History students will learn about a range of perspectives through their study of Elizabethan and Victorian Exploration as well as the Cold War.**
- **Students have been set key reading homework including: 'Heroes of History' and 'A Medal for Leroy', based on the story of Walter Tull (available in the library).**
- **Year 7 students will be considering the life and times of John Blanke, the Tudor trumpeter.**
- **Year 9 students have been considering the diversity of soldiers who fought for Britain in the World wars, with particular focus of Walter Tull.**
- **A-Level History students will learn about the Civil Rights Movement, the experiences of African Americans following World War Two and opposition to the Jim Crow laws.**
- **Sixth Form students have been encouraged to consider the Till film (2022), the story of Emmett Till's mother and her campaign for justice for her son.**



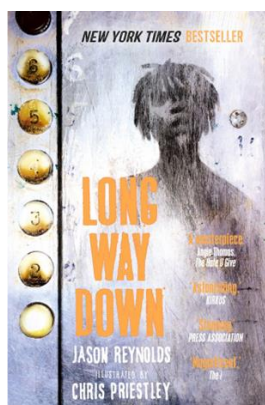
Part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust



Robert Smyth Academy

Library Lessons and Recommended Reading

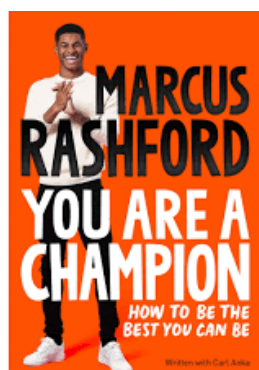
In all our library lessons during Black History Month, we will be introducing students to a great range of titles we have in our library which reflect the diversity of modern Britain and the contributions that black communities have made in literature and society.



'Long Way Down' by Jason Reynolds

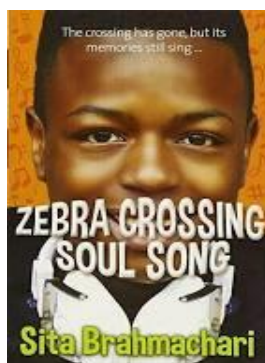
From the author:

"I hope young readers think deeply about the importance of decision making, and how often we make decisions that impact our lives in big or small ways. I also want us all to think about the idea of being haunted. When we say 'haunted', we always think of ghosts, anything that's ephemeral or abstract, but the truth is that all of us are haunted by something. Whether it be your parents' teachings, your education, the bad or good things that have happened to you, we're all being haunted".



'You Are a Champion: How to Be the Best You Can Be' by Marcus Rashford

Marcus Rashford (MBE) is famous worldwide for his skills both on and off the pitch – but before he was a Manchester United and England footballer, and long before he started his inspiring campaign to end child food poverty, he was just an average kid from Wythenshawe, South Manchester. Now the nation's favourite footballer wants to show you how to achieve your dreams, in this positive and inspiring guide for life.



'Zebra Crossing Soul Song' by Sita Brahmachari

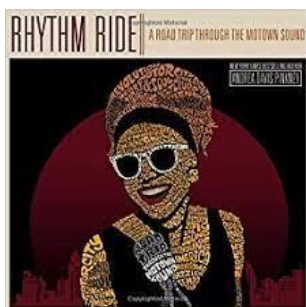
Lenny has spent most of his life at the zebra crossing, and for many of those years Otis, the singing 'zebra man', has helped him on his way. But when Otis' sad past comes back to haunt him, Lenny is forced to face his crossroads alone. Only by examining the memories of their friendship can Lenny discover the truth...



Part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust

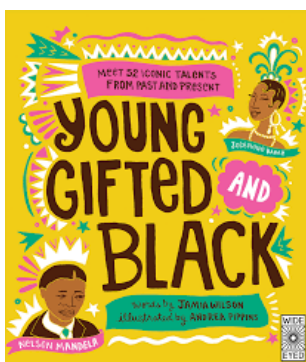


Robert Smyth Academy



'Rhythm Ride' by Andrea Davis Pinkney charts a road trip through Motown

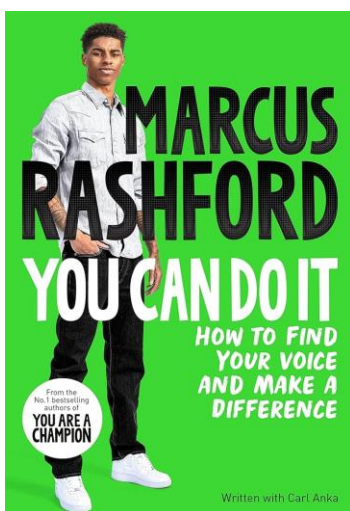
Berry Gordy began Motown in 1959 with an \$800 loan from his family. He converted the garage of a residential house into a studio and recruited teenagers from the neighbourhood-like Smokey Robinson, Mary Wells, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and Diana Ross to sing for his new label. Meanwhile, the country was on the brink of a cultural revolution, and one of the most powerful agents of change in the following decade would be this group of young black performers from urban Detroit. From Berry Gordy and his remarkable vision to the Civil Rights movement, from the behind-the-scenes musicians, choreographers, and song writers to the most famous recording artists of the century, Andrea Davis Pinkney takes readers on a Rhythm Ride through the story of Motown.



'Young Gifted and Black' by Jamia Wilson

All children deserve to see themselves represented positively in the books they read. Highlighting the talent and contributions of black leaders and change makers from around the world, readers will be empowered to discover what can be achieved.

The 52 icons include: Mary Seacole, Beyonce Knowles, Kofi Annan, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nina Simone, Simone Biles, Stevie Wonder, Nelson Mandela, Louis Armstrong, Rosa Parks, Naomi Campbell, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Muhammad Ali, Shirley Chisholm, Steve McQueen, Zadie Smith and Usain Bolt



Coming soon...

This new inspirational book from Marcus Rashford will be coming into the library soon:

Marcus uses the power of his voice to shine a light on the injustices that he cares passionately about, and now he wants to help YOU find the power in yours! From surrounding yourself with the right team, to showing kindness to those around you, to celebrating and championing difference, *You Can Do It* shows you that your voice really does matter and that you can do anything you put your mind to. You don't have to be an international footballer to make a difference - even the smallest changes can have the biggest impact.



Part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust



Robert Smyth Academy

Black History Month

Human Library Talk: "District Nursing in South Africa"

Recently, sixteen students from Years 7 – 10 chose to attend the latest Human Library session which aligns with **Black History Month**. Micky, a Community Champions volunteer from Lutterworth, shared her experiences of living in South Africa. Micky was born in Holland and then moved to South Africa when 18 years old.

She moved to a nurses' home and spent three and a half years training to gain a Nursing Diploma. Food and accommodation were free, and trainee nurses were paid (35 Rand a month, about £ 1.50!) The course covered urology, gynaecology, orthopaedics and Ear, Nose and Throat modules.

Micky spent 50-years in nursing and did a variety of roles, working in the operating theatres, delivering babies at home as a District Nurse, and even undertaking more training to become a nurse tutor. *"I loved my job – it was just great to help so many people."*

Apartheid, the political system where black and white people are segregated, was in place for most of Micky's working life - this meant white nurses worked in white hospitals and black nurses in black hospitals. *"The only time I got to nurse black people was if I accompanied doctors to rural areas after a stabbing."*

There is no publicly funded National Health Service (NHS) so most people in South Africa have Medical Aid and need to pay for healthcare costs. South Africans also pay forward for schooling and university.

Micky's family decided to move to England after her husband was held at gunpoint twice. Violence was prevalent with frequent murders, car, and house robberies. Most people had five or six levels of security e.g., alarm system, burglar-proof windows, fences around the house and garden, spiked electric fence with security guards and guard dogs. Corruption was rife with politicians not investing in good public facilities.

Students asked what Micky missed about South Africa, she responded: *"I loved the sunshine, my swimming pool, and the incredible National Parks like Kruger. I liked seeing warthog families walking in line with their tails held up. I remember a giraffe licking me with its long (30cm) dark tongue which felt like sandpaper."*

Students talked about their family links with South Africa and Zimbabwe, and thanked Micky for a fantastic session. The consensus view was expressed by one student; "This has been so interesting; I have learnt a lot."

They also told Micky about a stall in Harborough Market where she can get proper biltong and Boerwer sausages, South African specialities.

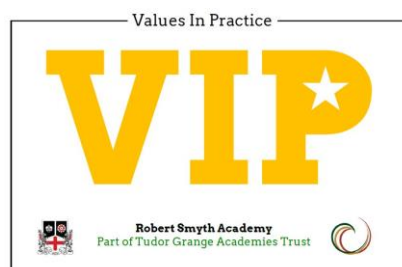
Black History Month: How can I get involved and find out more?

Families who want to find out more about Black History Month can get involved in local events organised [here](#).

However, the best thing that families can do to support our students in their learning about Black History Month is simply to talk to them about what they have learnt and to discuss their views of a subject matter that is challenging, rich, and complex in equal measure.



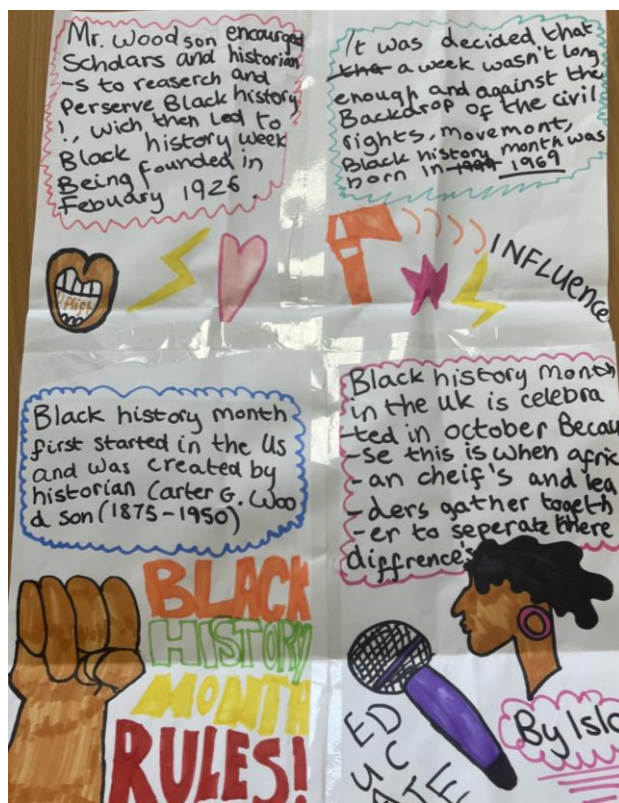
Part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust



Black History Month: Student expression

At the conclusion of this letter, I wanted to share this great poster drawn by Isla (Year 7) who was inspired by the PSHE session with her Form Tutor, Miss Woodford. She wanted to express her understanding and engagement with Black History Month, in her own way and this led her to read more about the subject in her own time.

At Robert Smyth Academy, we promote the importance of critical thinking so that our students have the broadest education possible and an open mind. In a 'post-truth' age when we all traverse headlines that are too frequently characterised by oversimplification and vilification, we have a responsibility to speak the truth and to embrace the perspectives of other communities. I felt that Isla's work represented that aspiration perfectly. Well done!





Robert Smyth Academy

Key Dates for the half-term

- **Wednesday 11th October:** Year 11 Careers Day
- **Thursday 12th October:** Year 7 Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Trip
- **Thursday 12th October:** Year 7 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Friday 13th October:** Year 7 Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Trip
- **Friday 13th October:** School closes at the normal time for October half-term
- **Monday 23rd October:** School reopens.

Parents' Evening Dates

- **Thursday 7th December:** Year 11 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Wednesday 13th December:** Year 11 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 18th January:** Year 13 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 25th January:** Year 12 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 1st February:** Year 9 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 8th February:** Year 9 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Tuesday 12th March:** Year 10 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 21st March:** Year 10 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 23rd May:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 6th June:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)

Teacher Training Days

- **Friday 6th October**
- **Friday 1st December**
- **Monday 29th January**
- **Friday 28th June**

I hope you have a great weekend and that our students will appreciate the extra day of rest and recovery tomorrow ahead of the last week before half-term.

For Year 7 parents, this will inevitably become a moment of realisation of how quickly time flies at secondary school and when you're having fun!

Yours sincerely,

Dan Cleary
Principal



Part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust