



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. This year, the specific theme of Black History Month is Reclaiming the Narrative.

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 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. To address the theme of Reclaiming the Narrative, students will consider media interpretations of the contributions of black communities to modern Britain. They will also be taught about the long history of black people in this country and the impact they have had in the worlds of politics, sport, music, business, the arts, and the military, going back to Roman times. They will also be signposted to local events and suggested further reading.

GCSE English students will study the poetry of John Agard, specifically 'Checking Out Me History' as part of their Power and Conflict anthology.

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. KS3 students have also been invited to complete a timeline of influential key figures from Black history before the end of the month, available on Satchel One, and 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 History students will also be considering the life and times of John Blanke, the Tudor trumpeter.

Year 9 History 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. They have also been set research tasks to watch 'The Hate that Hate Produced' (Malcolm X), The Rise of the KKK and the horribly atmospheric Mississippi Burning.

All students in the Sixth Form have been encouraged to consider the film Till (2022), the story of Emmett Till's mother and her campaign for justice for her son, as part of their PSHE programme.



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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.



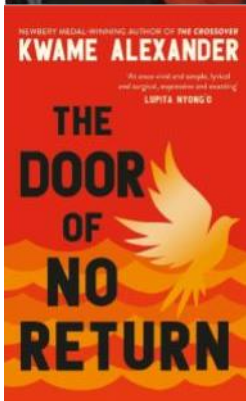
'Akata Witch by NNedi Okorafor

Sunny is the main character, and she feels like she does not fit in anywhere. She then discovers a latent magical ability. Will she use her power against a powerful threat? This is essentially a detective story which spans continents and magical dimensions.



'Rise to the Sun' by Leah Johnson

The main protagonists are Olivia and Toni they are both searching for their way forward in life. They find each other and they realise they need each other more than they ever imagined. This is a beautiful story mixed with grief and joy. Described as an 'effervescent gem of a book.'



'The Door of No Return by Kwame Alexander

This book was recommended by the National Literacy Trust through their Reading Teachers – Reading Pupils scheme. It is a verse novel and follows the story of Kofi who is a boy living a simple life with his family in West Africa he dreams of winning swimming races. During a festival between two rival villages a tragedy occurs. Kofi ends up in a battle for his own existence. How can he continue to dream when his hope is being crushed? This book is currently being read by a year 9 tutor group.

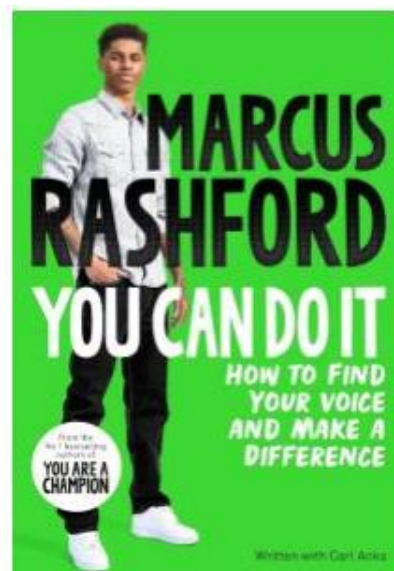
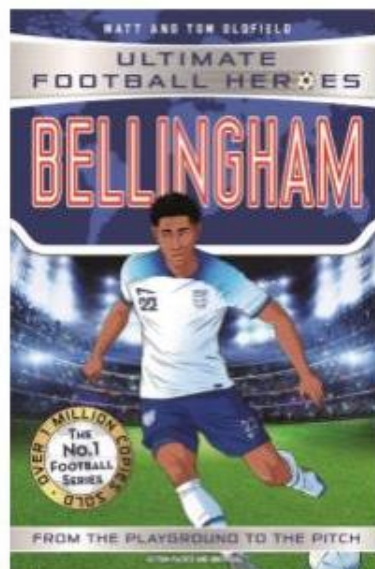
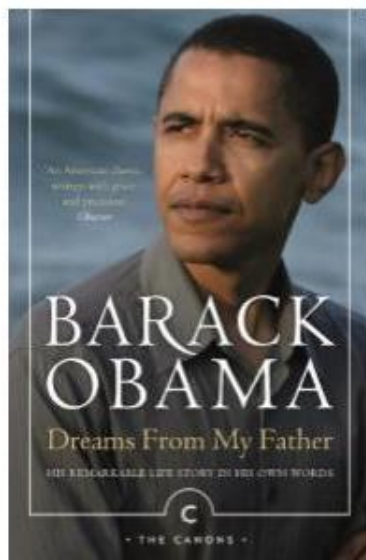


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Some inspiring books include



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.

If you would like to offer a parental view on how we could further meet our aim of promoting the intentions of Black History Month, please do get in touch with Ms Kirk, who is the strategic lead for personal development in the academy – lkirk@robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk.

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



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