



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.

At Year 7 and Year 8, exciting new topics have been added to the curriculum this year. Later in Year 7, pupils will study the amazing achievements of Mansa Musa, king of Medieval Mali. Year 8 pupils have recently studied the Haitian Revolution, and the establishment of the world's first black republic. Year 9 History pupils have been considering the diversity of soldiers who fought for Britain in the Great War, and the imperial connection that saw hundreds of thousands of black men and women serve. These topics are not a 'bolt on' to tick a box, but rather a genuine improvement in our curriculum for a broader historical education.

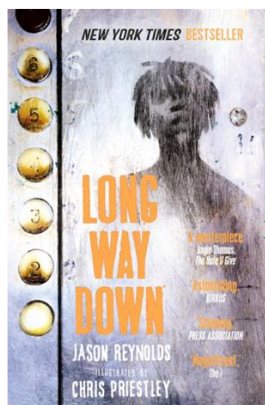
Their studies in Year 9 will be of help to our current GCSE pupils, when they come to undertake their Historic Environment study of the Western Front.

A-Level History students are learning about the Civil Rights Movement, the experiences of African Americans following World War Two and opposition to racism and the denial of civil rights.

The History Department would also like to ensure that our supplies of books to read for pleasure remain up to date. Thanks to our brilliant Librarian, Ms Coxon, for buying a class set of *Birdie* by JP Rose, which was nominated for last year's Young Quills book prize by the Historical Association.

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".



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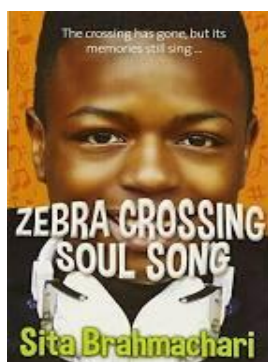


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'Birdie' by J. P. Rose



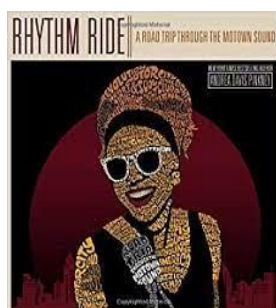
When Birdie is sent to live with her great-aunt in 1950s Yorkshire, she befriends the village's last remaining pit pony. A story of hope and courage, exploring themes of family, racism and identity. Shortlisted for the Young Quills Award and the Diverse Book Awards. Birdie Bagshaw has never known her parents. Having grown up in a children's home in 1950s Leeds, now she has come to live with her great-aunt in the Yorkshire Dales. From her arrival, Birdie is treated like an outsider by the local children. When their bullying drives Birdie to hide in the nearby coal mine, she finds an unexpected rescuer in the form of Mr Duke, the last remaining pit pony in the village. As the weeks pass, Birdie forms a special bond with the spirited little pony. But his future is in danger, and Birdie comes up with a daring plan to save his life in return . . . A future classic. A powerful novel about love, identity and finding your power in a world where everyone is against you... powerfully resonant today. A real triumph - Book of the Month, The Bookseller. This book has been strongly recommended by the RSA History Department and is now established as one of our new tutor reading books, to be enjoyed by a wide range of students.



'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...

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



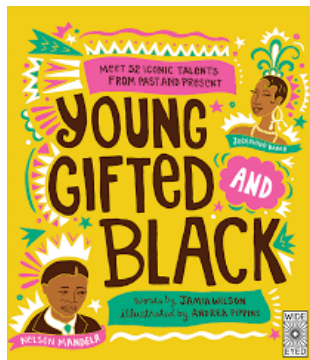
Berry Gordy began Motown in 1959 with an \$800 loan from his family. He converted the garage of a residential house into a studio and recruited teenagers from the neighborhood-like Smokey Robinson, Mary Wells, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and Diana Ross-to sing for his new label. Meanwhile, the country 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.



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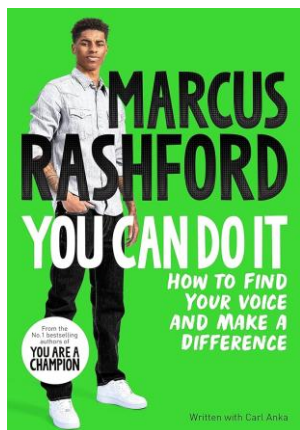
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'Young Gifted and Black' by Jamia Wilson

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



'You can do it' by Marcus Rashford

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.

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.

I hope you have a great weekend 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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