

AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

The general definition of African American literature is writings produced by authors who are of African descent living in the United States. The beginnings of this literature can be traced back to the late 1700s. Writings from this time encompassed verses written by enslaved poets and autobiographical slave narratives. The most prevalent influences in this category include the African American concepts of God, ancestral cultures, folktales and treatment by American Society in general.

TOP THEMES

Although themes can vary wildly, there are several common ones in African American literature: Conflicts involving individuals and community, racism, equality, freedom, slavery, and the subject of religion.

A BIT OF HISTORY

The first African American to publish a book was Phillis Wheatley. She was a West African girl sold into slavery in Boston, Mass. She received an education by her enslavers which was unusual for the time. She not only learned to read and write, she learned Greek and Latin as well. She began writing poetry as a teenager and some of her poems were published. "On Messrs. Hussey and Coffin", was a poem written about several sailors escaping a disaster and was published in 1767. Years later, while traveling in England with the son of her enslavers, she published first book of poetry in 1773. It was called Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral. Shortly thereafter, she was freed from slavery by her owners. Wheatley married and published few poems thereafter. Sadly, she died in poverty in 1784.

Where to find these books:

Books are located in their respective sections listed below.

Fiction=General Fiction Section
Mystery=Mystery Section
Non-Fiction=Call number

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ADULTS

AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

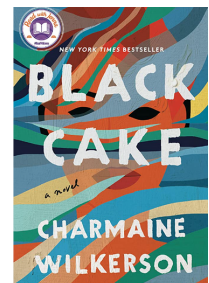


Booker T. Washington
1856-1915

Beloved

by Toni Morrison (Fiction)

Set in post-Civil War Ohio, it is the story of Sethe, an escaped slave who has risked her life in order to wrench herself from a living death; who has lost a husband and buried a child. Sethe, who now lives in a small house on the edge of town with her daughter, Denver, her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, and a disturbing, mesmerizing apparition who calls herself Beloved.



Black Cake

by Charmaine Wilkerson (Fiction)

In this moving debut novel, two estranged siblings must set aside their differences to deal with their mother's death and her hidden past--a journey of discovery that takes them from the Caribbean to London to California and ends with her famous black cake. In present-day California, Eleanor Bennett's death leaves behind a puzzling inheritance for her two children, Byron and Benny: a traditional Caribbean black cake, made from a family recipe with a long history, and a voice recording.

The Color Purple

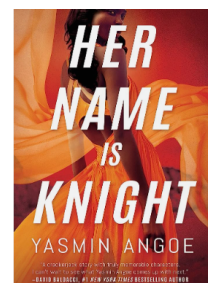
by Alice Walker (Fiction)

Beautifully imagined and deeply compassionate, this is the story of two sisters--one a missionary in Africa and the other a child wife living in the South--who sustain their loyalty to and trust in each other across time, distance, and silence. This classic novel of American literature is rich with passion, pain, inspiration, and an indomitable love of life.

Half a Yellow Sun

by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Fiction)

Re-creates the 1960s struggle of Biafra to establish an independent republic in Nigeria, following the intertwined lives of the characters through a military coup, the Biafran secession, and the resulting civil war.



Her Name is Knight

by Yasmin Angoe (Mystery)

Stolen from her Ghanaian village as a child, Nena Knight has plenty of motives to kill. Now an elite assassin for a powerful business syndicate called the Tribe, she gets plenty of chances. But while on assignment in Miami, Nena ends up saving a life, not taking one. She emerges from the experience a

changed woman, finally hopeful for a life beyond rage and revenge

Homegoing

by Yaa Gyasi (Fiction)

Two half-sisters, unknown to each other, are born into different villages in 18th-century Ghana and experience profoundly different lives and legacies throughout subsequent generations marked by wealth, slavery, war, coal mining, the Great Migration and the realities of 20th-century Harlem.

Maame

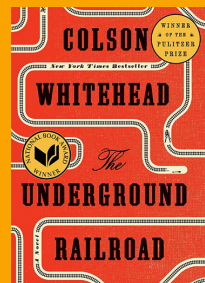
by Jessica George (Fiction)

Maame (ma-meh) has many meanings in Twi but in this case, it means woman. It's fair to say that Maddie's life in London is far from rewarding. With a mother who spends most of her time in Ghana (yet still somehow manages to be overbearing), Maddie is the primary caretaker for her father, who suffers from advanced stage Parkinson's. At work, her boss is a nightmare and Maddie is tired of always being the only Black person in every meeting.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

by Zora Neal Hurston (Fiction)

Janie Crawford, an attractive, confident, middle-aged Black woman, returns to Eatonville, Florida, after a long absence. The Black townspeople gossip about her and speculate about where she has been and what has happened to her young husband, Tea Cake. They take her confidence as aloofness, but Janie's friend Pheoby Watson sticks up for her. Pheoby visits her to find out what has happened.



The Underground Railroad

by Colson Whitehead (Fiction)

Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted. Their first

stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens.

NON-FICTION

Between the World and Me

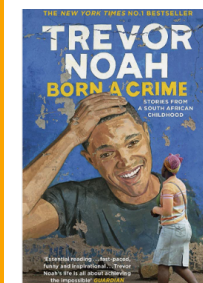
by Ta-Nehisi Coates (305.8009 COA)

Told through the author's own evolving understanding of the subject over the course of his life comes a bold and personal investigation into America's racial history and its contemporary echoes.

Becoming

by Michelle Obama (B OBAMA, M)

In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America, she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private.



Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood

by Trevor Noah (968.065 NOA)

The compelling, inspiring, and comically sublime story of one man's coming-of-age, set during the twilight of apartheid and the tumultuous days of freedom that followed.

The Dead Are Arising : the Life of Malcolm X

by Les Payne (B X, M)

A visionary portrait of the iconic civil rights leader draws on hundreds of hours of interviews with surviving family members, intelligence officers and political leaders to offer new insights into Malcolm X's Depression-era youth, religious conversion and 1965 assassination.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

by Bryan Stevenson (B STEVENSON, B)

The founder of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama recounts his experiences as a lawyer working to assist those desperately in need, reflecting on his pursuit of the ideal of compassion in American justice.

Dreams from my Father

by Barack Obama (B OBAMA, B)

In this lyrical, unsentimental, and compelling memoir, the son of a black African father and a white American mother searches for a workable meaning to his life as a black American. It begins in New York, where Barack Obama learns that his father has been killed in a car accident. This sudden death inspires an emotional odyssey, first to a small town in Kansas, from which he retraces the migration of his mother's family to Hawaii, and then to Kenya, where he meets the African side of his family.

Outliers

by Malcolm Gladwell (302.14 GLA)

Identifies the qualities of successful people, posing theories about the cultural, family, and idiosyncratic factors that shape high achievers, in a resource that covers such topics as the secrets of software billionaires, why certain cultures are associated with better academic performance, and why the Beatles earned their fame.