

Black History Month Theme 2025: African Americans and Labor

In celebration of this year's theme, "African Americans and Labor", the IDEA committee humbly shares a snippet of this poem by Maurice N. Corbett, an African American writer and poet, who highlights the cruelty black people face within our society, as well as the endless dedication and commitment this community embodied throughout various labor industries.

*"The man that labors adds to health,
And by his labor pileth wealth;
This rule unto the South applied
Leaves us but one thing to decide:
That since the Negroes' daily toil
To extract yield from fertile soil,
In every sovereign Southern state,
'Tis they, the South do renovate.*

*Was slavery but the black man's tool
His all-important training- school,
His safe and sure foundation stone,
For base of structure of his own,
For without aught was he set free
But held to labor's legacy;
Though owning not a foot of soil,
Rich was he found in art of toil."*

-Maurice N. Corbett, "Negro Labor Changed Dixie" (1914)

Black history is American history! Please come down to the library to celebrate Black History Month through reading great works, like this poem from Langston Hughes:

I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance, spanning the 1920s and early 1930s, was a groundbreaking cultural movement centered in Harlem, New York. This "New Negro Movement" marked an extraordinary flowering of African American artistic and intellectual achievement. Writers like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, musicians like Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, and visual artists like Aaron Douglas created works celebrating Black identity and experience. The movement challenged racial stereotypes and fostered new cultural pride. Harlem became a vibrant hub where African American literature, music, theater, and visual art flourished, leaving an indelible mark on American culture that continues to inspire today. For more information, go to the Harlem Renaissance [page](#) on History.com.

Black History Month Recommendations

As we celebrate Black History Month, it's an opportune time to explore and appreciate the rich tapestry of African American culture and history. This month offers a chance to reflect on the struggles, triumphs, and contributions of Black individuals throughout history. To deepen our understanding and appreciation, we've curated a list of impactful movies, thought-provoking podcasts, insightful books, and inspiring music. These recommendations not only highlight the diverse experiences and achievements of African Americans but also provide valuable perspectives that enrich our collective knowledge. We encourage students and employees alike to engage with these resources and join in honoring Black history and culture.

Movies:

1. *Selma* (2014) - A powerful film about the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches.
2. *Hidden Figures* (2016) - The true story of three African American women mathematicians at NASA.
3. *Black Panther* (2018) - A groundbreaking superhero film celebrating African culture and heritage.
4. *13th* (2016) - A documentary exploring the intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration in the U.S.
5. *Sarafina!* (1992) – A heart wrenching yet inspiring story of the 1976 Soweto Uprising.

Podcasts:

1. *1619* - A New York Times podcast examining the long shadow of American slavery.
2. *Code Switch* - NPR's podcast that tackles race and identity in America.
3. *The Nod* - A podcast celebrating Black culture and its impact on society.
4. *Black History Year* - A podcast that dives into the history and culture of Black America.

Books:

1. *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. Du Bois - A seminal work in African American literature.
2. *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates - A powerful letter to the author's son about race in America.
3. *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson - A historical account of the Great Migration.
4. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison - A Pulitzer Prize-winning novel exploring the legacy of slavery.

Music:

1. *Songs in the Key of Life* by Stevie Wonder - A classic album with themes of love, social justice, and spirituality.
2. *To Pimp a Butterfly* by Kendrick Lamar - An album that addresses complex themes of race and identity.
3. *Lemonade* by Beyoncé - An album that explores themes of Black womanhood and empowerment.
4. *What's Going On* by Marvin Gaye - A timeless album addressing social issues and the quest for peace.