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# The Color Purple



## Required Reading

*A list of African American authors that the "educated person" should be somewhat familiar with*

By Teresa Jefferson  
Staff

African American authors, scholars and creative writers have long captured black culture and intertwined it with a social awareness. To dispel and correct black myths and stereotypes, myths created and established by a dominant white society, African Americans must begin to redefine themselves. Young blacks especially must take up the torch and begin their quest to find their past and their people. I first found an inkling of my culture in Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. I can honestly say this book changed my life. Before reading it, I was lost in myriad of white authors, most writing about white experiences. A lot of the time I found that I could not relate with the characters and what they were going through. In Angelou's autobiography, I found myself, some of my fears, thoughts, feelings and relationships. For the first time I finally saw in black and white that my people actually loved, deceived, cried, lied and

died. Their presence, their culture seemed finally to be recognized. A small thirst was quenched for me but a insatiable hunger was created. More than a curiosity, I now feel a mental liberation and a burning need to read and learn as much as I can by and about my people.

The origin and growth of African American literature dates farther back than Jamestown, Virginia, 1619. Africans were great scholars and storytellers long before their first appearance in North America. The rich and colorful history, art and folklore of West Africa, the ancestral home of most African Americans, present evidence of this and more.

In the United States, the art and literature of African Americans has had an economic origin. Much that is original in black American folklore, spirituals and blues can be traced to the economic institution of slavery and its influence upon the African American's soul.

After the initial poetic debut of Jupiter Hammon and Phyllis Wheatley, the main literary expression of the African American

was the slave narrative. One of the earliest of these narratives came from Gustavas Vassa, an African from Nigeria. This was a time of great protest and pamphlets in the United States. The free blacks in the North and those who had escaped from the South made their mark upon this time and awakened the conscience of the nation. Their lack of formal education gave their narratives a strong and shocking truthful edge.

Even after the period of the slave narratives, the black writer was still treated as an oddity. This attitude continued in a lessening degree throughout one of the richest and most productive periods in African American writing in the United States — the Harlem Renaissance. The community of Harlem was the birthplace and center for this cultural emancipation. African American writers seemed to discover and explore a new voice within himself. In short story collections like Jean Toomer's Cane (1923) and Langston Hughes' The Ways of White Folks (1934) these authors uncovered aspects of African Ameri-

can life explored and presented in a way that was contrary to the stereotypes readers had grown accustomed to.

The black writer and his people are now standing at the crossroads of history. This is the black writers' special vantage point and this is what makes the task and the mission of the black writer distinctly different. In the next phase of African American literature, I believe a literature of celebration must be created—not a celebration of oppression, but a celebra-

Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man and others

Marcus Garvey, Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey

Vincent Harding, There is a River: The Other American Revolution

Nathan Hare, The Black Anglo-Saxons and other works

Aminifu Harvey, The Black Family: an Afro-centric Perspective

Hubert Harrison, When Africa Awakes

Zora Neal Hurston, Their Eyes

## Commentary

tion of survival in spite of it.

There is no set way to develop and strengthen a Afrocentric conscience. But African Americans must take up the torch and discover their own people, liberate their own minds from untrue myths and stereotypes, before they can liberate their brothers and sisters from mental, social and economic bondage. This reading list by no means encompasses all the literature black peoples have contributed, but it is a start. So get to it—broaden your horizons and your focus.

### REQUIRED READING LIST

Na'im Akbar, From Miseducation to Education and other works

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Cheikh Anta-Diop, The African Origin of Civilization and other works

Molefi Kete Asante, Afrocentricity and other works

Yosef ben-Jochannan, Africa: Mother of Civilization: Blackman on the Nile and other works

James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time and other works

H. Rap Brown, Die Nigger Die  
Sterling Brown, Southern Road

Stokely Carmichael (and Charles V. Hamilton), Black Power: Stokely Speaks

Charles W. Chesnutt, The Conjure Woman and others

Martin R. Delany, The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States

Paul Laurence Dunbar, Oak and Ivy and others

W.E.B. DuBois, The World and Africa and others

Harry Edwards, The Black Athlete

### Were Watching God

George Jackson, Blood in my Eye

James Weldon Johnson, God's Trombones

Richard King, The Black Do!  
Jawanza Kunjufu, Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys

Malcolm X, Autobiography of Malcolm X: Malcolm X Speaks

Elijah Muhammed, Message to the Blackman in America

Gloria Naylor, Mama Day and others

Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah and other works

Wade Nobles, African Psychology; Understanding the Black Family and other works

Jean Toomer, Cane

Paul Robeson, Here I Stand  
David Walker, Walker's Appeal

Robert F. Williams, Negroes with Guns

Carter G. Woodson, The Miseducation of the Negro and other works

Bobby Wright, Psychopathic Racial Personality

Richard Wright, Native Son and others

POSTERS • ROCK & ROLL  
REGGAE • SKA  
IMPORT & VINTAGE • PSYCHEDELIC  
PUNK • PROGRESSIVE  
GUATEMALAN TAMS, BAGS  
ACCESSORIES  
POSTCARDS  
STICKERS • GRATEFUL DEAD • INDIA PRINTS  
MERCURY • UNDERGROUND COMICS  
PATCHES  
948  
6948

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ESSENTIAL OILS  
BATA SHIRTS  
USED BOOKS, LPs & TAPES  
CALENDARS

STOKELY'S BACK

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CARRBORO