

Black (African American) Literature

Black literature had its beginnings in oral slave accounts and folktales told from one person to another. Most were not put in writing until the middle 1800s. Many early writings, reprinted in the 20th Century, are included here.

The following fiction and nonfiction books, by or about Africans or African Americans, are listed in alphabetical order. Words in parentheses comment on main character, author, or book. (See also List 142, Heroes: Black [African American], and List 144, Heroines: Black [African American].)

- Ake*—Wole Soyinka (describes Nigerian childhood)
All American Women—Johnnetta B. Cole (Ed.) (African American culture)
American's First Negro Poet: The Complete Works of Jupiter Hammon of Long Island—Jupiter Hammon (first black poet to have poetry published)
And Still I Rise—Maya Angelou (black writer)
And Then We Heard Thunder—John O. Killens (black soldiers)
Arilla Sun Down—Virginia Hamilton (part-Indian/part-black girl)
The Autobiography of Malcolm X—Alex Haley (black leader)
The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman—Ernest Gaines (black leader)
An Autumn Love Cycle—Georgia Douglas Johnson (black author)
Baby of the Family—Tina McElroy Ansa (African American girl)
Barbara Jordan: Congresswoman—Linda Carlson Johnson (black woman)
Batouala—Rene Maran (novelist from Martinique)
Bearing the Cross—David J. Garrow
Before the Mayflower—Lerone Bennett
Beloved—Toni Morrison (novel by black Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winner)
The Best of Simple—Langston Hughes (black poet)
Black Abolitionists—Benjamin Quarles (black historian)
Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words—Milton Meltzer (Ed.) (black experiences)
Black Boy—Richard Wright (black experiences)
Black Dance in America—James Haskins (black dance)
Black in Selma: The Uncommon Life of J. L. Chestnut, Jr.—J. L. Chestnut (black experiences)
Black Like Me—John Howard Griffin (white man poses as black)
Black Magic: Sabotage, Target Study, Black Art; Collected Poetry—Imamu Amiri Baraka a.k.a. LeRoi Jones (black poet)
Black Music in America: A History Through Its People—James Haskins (black music)
Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free, A.D. 1933–1940—George Samuel Schuyler (black account)
Black Odyssey—Nathan Irvin Huggins (black slavery)
Black Theater in America—James Haskins (black theater)
Blues for Mr. Charlie, a Play—James Baldwin (black author)
Blues People—Imamu Amiri Baraka a.k.a. LeRoi Jones (African American culture)
Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856–1901—Louis R. Harlan (biography)

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- Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901–1915*—Louis R. Harlan (biography)
- Bound for the North Star: True Stories of Fugitive Slaves*—Dennis Brindell Fradin (slaves who escaped to the North)
- Breaking the Chains: African-American Slave Resistance*—William Loren Katz (black slavery)
- Bright April*—Marguerite de Angeli (black girl)
- Brown Girl, Brownstones*—Paule Marshall (black author)
- Cane*—Jean Toomer (black author)
- Celebration*—Mari Evans (black poet)
- Chain of Fire*—Beverley Naidoo (South African experience)
- The Changelings*—Jo Sinclair (black girls)
- Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*—William Wells Brown (first American black author to publish a novel)
- Clover*—Dori Sanders (black-white relations)
- The Collected Poems of Jean Toomer*—Jean Toomer (black poet)
- The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown*—Sterling A. Brown (black poet)
- The Color Purple*—Alice Walker (black woman's story by Pulitzer Prize winner)
- The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar*—Paul Laurence Dunbar (black poet)
- Conjure Woman and Other Tales*—Charles W. Chesnutt (slavery)
- Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer*—Oscar Micheaux (black culture)
- Cry, the Beloved Country*—Alan Paton (South African race relations)
- A Dark and Sordid Mass*—Mari Evans (black poetry collection)
- The Dark Child*—Camara Laye (Guinean autobiographical novel)
- The Dead Lecturer: Poems*—Imamu Amiri Baraka a.k.a. LeRoi Jones (black author)
- Duke Ellington*—James Lincoln Collier (black musician)
- Durango Street*—Frank Bonham (black teenager)
- Dutchman and the Slave: Two Plays*—Imamu Amiri Baraka a.k.a. LeRoi Jones (black author)
- Edith Jackson*—Rosa Guy (black family)
- Eight Men*—Richard Wright (black writer)
- Ellington Was Not a Street*—Ntozake Shange (published 2004 by black writer)
- Fences*—August Wilson (black playwright; Pulitzer Prize winner)
- The Fire Next Time*—James Baldwin (African American culture)
- For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow Is Enuf: A Choreopoem*—Ntosake Shange (African American culture)
- For My People*—Margaret Walker (black poet)
- The Foxes of Harrow*—Frank Yerby (black novelist)
- Freedom Road*—Howard Fast (black slave)
- Freedom Train*—Dorothy Sterling (story of Harriet Tubman, escaped slave)
- The Friends*—Rosa Guy (black girl)
- The Friendship*—Mildred D. Taylor (black/white friendship)
- From Slavery to Freedom*—John Hope Franklin (African American culture)
- Frye Street & Environs: The Collected Works of Marita Bonner*—Marita Bonner (black author)
- A Gathering of Days*—Joan W. Blos (runaway black slave)
- A Gathering of Old Men*—Ernest Gaines (black/white relationships)
- George Washington Carver*—Linda O. McMurry (biography)

- God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*—James Weldon Johnson (black author; founder of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP])
- Going to Meet the Man*—James Baldwin (black author)
- Going to the Territory*—Ralph Ellison (black author)
- The Goophered Grapevine*—Charles Wadell Chesnutt (short story)
- Go Tell It on the Mountain*—James Baldwin (race relations)
- Great Slave Narratives*—Arna Bontemps (autobiographies of slaves)
- Guests in the Promised Land*—Kristin Hunter (stories of black life)
- Hail the Conquering Hero*—Frank Yerby (black novelist)
- Harlem Shadows*—Claude McKay (black poet)
- A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*—Alice Childress (black drug user)
- Home Girls and Hand Grenades*—Sonia Sanchez (black poet)
- The Horse Trader*—Wade Everett (black cowboy)
- If Beale Street Could Talk*—James Baldwin (black man)
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*—Maya Angelou (autobiography)
- Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women 1860–1960*—Mary Helen Washington (African American culture)
- Invisible Man*—Ralph Ellison (black struggle)
- Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted*—Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (black author)
- Judith Jamison: Aspects of a Dancer*—Olga Maynard (African American culture)
- Jump Ship to Freedom*—James L. and Christopher Collier (sons of slave)
- Kareem*—Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Mignon McCarthy (black athlete)
- Laughing to Keep from Crying*—Langston Hughes (black author)
- Leroy and the Old Man*—W. E. Butterworth (black youth)
- Les Blancs: Collected Last Plays of Lorraine Hansberry*—Robert Nemiroff (Ed.) (black playwright)
- Let No Man Write My Epitaph*—Willard Motley (black author)
- Letters of Phillis Wheatley, The Negro Slave-Poet of Boston, 1864*—Phillis Wheatley (black writer)
- Let the Circle Be Unbroken*—Mildred D. Taylor (black family novel)
- Life and Times of Michael K*—J. M. Coetzee (novel about South African black man)
- The Life of Langston Hughes: I Dream a World, 1941–1967*—Arnold Rampersad (biography)
- The Life of Langston Hughes: I, Too, Sing America, 1902–1941*—Arnold Rampersad (biography)
- Linden Hills*—Gloria Naylor (black novelist)
- Listen for the Fig Tree*—Sharon Bell Mathis (black writer)
- Little Vic*—Doris Gates (black stable boy)
- The Living Is Easy*—Dorothy West (black writer)
- Louis Armstrong: An American Genius*—James Lincoln Collier (black musician)
- The Love Space Demands*—Ntozake Shange (black poet)
- Ludell*—Brenda Wilkinson (black girl)
- Ludell and Willie*—Brenda Wilkinson (black girl)

- Ludell's New York Time*—Brenda Wilkinson (black girl)
- Luke Was There*—Eleanor Clymer (black social worker)
- Manchild in the Promised Land*—Claude Brown (black man)
- The Marrow of Tradition*—Charles Wadell Chestnutt (black author)
- Mary*—Mary E. Mebane
- Mary McLeod Bethune: Voice of Black Hope*—Milton Meltzer (black civil rights leader)
- M. C. Higgins, the Great*—Virginia Hamilton (black boy)
- Memoirs and Poems of Phillis Wheatley, 1834*—Phillis Wheatley (black writer)
- The Me Nobody Knows*—Steven M. Joseph (Ed.) (ghetto children's writings)
- Meridian*—Alice Walker (African American culture)
- Mine Boy*—Peter Abrahams (South African novel)
- The Mis-Education of the Negro*—Carter G. Woodson (African American culture)
- Mississippi Chariot*—Harriette Gillem Robinet (black boy)
- Mojo and the Russians*—Walter Dean Myers (black gang)
- The Move Makes the Man*—Bruce Brooks (black basketball player)
- Move Your Shadow: South Africa Black and White*—Joseph Lelyveld (South African conflict)
- Mumbo Jumbo*—Ishmael Reed (racial conflict satire)
- My Black Me: A Beginning Book of Black Poetry*—Arnold Adoff (compiler) (collection of poems by black poets)
- Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*—Frederick Douglass (autobiography of slave and abolitionist)
- Native Son*—Richard Wright (black experiences)
- Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley of Boston, in New England, 1773*—Phillis Wheatley (black writer)
- New and Collected Poems*—Ishmael Reed (black poetry)
- New and Selected Poems of Don L. Lee from 1966–1996* (black poet a.k.a. Haki R. Madhubuti)
- The New Negro*—Alain Locke (spokesman for black movement)
- Next: New Poems*—Lucille Clifton (black author)
- Nocturnes*—Leopold Sedar Senghor (African poetry collection)
- No Place to Be Somebody*—Charles Gordone (black playwright)
- No Sweetness Here*—Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghanan short story writer)
- One More River to Cross*—Will Henry (black cowboy)
- One-Way Ticket*—Langston Hughes (black writer)
- On These I Stand: An Anthology of the Best Poems of Countee Cullen*—Countee Cullen (black poet)
- The Original Colored House of David*—Martin Quigley (black boy)
- Our Dead Behind Us: Poems*—Audre Lorde (black poems)
- The Outsider*—Richard Wright (black writer)
- The Panther and the Lash: Poems of Our Times*—Langston Hughes (black author)
- Parable of the Sower*—Octavia Butler (black writer)
- Parting the Waters: America in The King Years, 1954–1963*—Taylor Branch (black writer)
- A Passage to India*—E. M. Forster (race relations)
- The Passion of Claude McKay: Selected Poetry and Prose, 1912–1948*—Claude McKay (Jamaican poet)

- The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*—Virginia Hamilton et al. (twenty-four black folktales)
- People of the City*—Cyprian Ekwensi (Nigerian novelist)
- The Piano Lesson*—August Wilson—(black playwright; winner of Pulitzer Prize)
- Pickle and Price*—Pieter Van Raven (black-white relations)
- Pillar of Fire*—Taylor Branch (black author)
- The Poems of Phillis Wheatley*—Phillis Wheatley (black poet)
- Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*—Phillis Wheatley
- The Poetical Works of James Madison Bell*—James Madison Bell (black poet)
- Prince Among Slaves*—Terry Alford (black slave)
- The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*—Nicholas Lemann (black experiences)
- Rachel, a Play in Three Acts*—Angelina Weld Grimk (black author)
- Rainbow Jordan*—Alice Childress (black women)
- A Raisin in the Sun*—Lorraine Hansberry (first Broadway play by a black woman)
- River of My Song*—Mari Evans (black playwright)
- The Road to Memphis*—Mildred D. Taylor (black-white problems)
- Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*—Mildred D. Taylor (black family)
- Roots*—Alex Haley (black slave heritage; winner of Pulitzer Prize)
- Sacred Cows and Other Edibles*—Nikki Giovanni (black author)
- Sent for You Yesterday*—John Edgar Wideman (black novelist; winner of PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction)
- Servant of Slaves*—Grace Irwin (black slave-trading)
- Shakespeare in Harlem*—Langston Hughes (black writer)
- The Short Fiction of Charles W. Chestnutt*—Charles Wadell Chestnutt (black author)
- The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*—Lorraine Hansberry (black playwright)
- Simple Speaks His Mind*—Langston Hughes (black writer)
- The Slave Dancer*—Paula Fox (black slave trade)
- A Soldier's Play*—Charles Fuller (black Pulitzer Prize winner)
- So Long a Letter*—Mariama Ba (widowed Moslem woman)
- Song of Solomon*—Toni Morrison (black novelist)
- Sorrow's Kitchen: The Life and Folklore of Zora Neale Hurston*—Mary E. Lyons (African American woman)
- Soul on Ice*—Eldridge Cleaver (black radical writer)
- The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*—W.E.B. DuBois (African American culture)
- Souder*—William H. Armstrong (black master and dog)
- South African Dispatches: Letters to My Countrymen*—Donald Wood (South Africans)
- Stop the Violence: Overcoming Self-Destruction*—Nelson George (Ed.) (black-white violence)
- Take a Giant Step*—Louis Stamford Peterson (black playwright)

- The Tales of Uncle Remus*—Julius Lester (reteller is black man)
- The Temple of My Familiar*—Alice Walker (black writer)
- Thank You, Jackie Robinson*—Barbara Cohen (black baseball player)
- Their Eyes Were Watching God*—Zora Neale Hurston (African American culture)
- Things Fall Apart*—Chinua Achebe (Nigerian novelist)
- The Third Generation*—Chester B. Himes (black author)
- This Strange New Feeling*—Julius Lester (black experiences)
- Thomas and Beulah*—Rita Dove (black poetry)
- A Time to Ride*—Ray Gauden (black cowboy)
- To Be a Slave*—Julius Lester (black slave life)
- To Be Young, Gifted, and Black*—Lorraine Hansberry (black playwright; winner of drama awards)
- To Kill a Mockingbird*—Lee Harper (race relations)
- Top Hand*—Wade Everett (black cowboy)
- Tripwire*—Brian Garfield (black cowboy)
- Uncle Tom's Cabin*—Harriet Beecher Stowe (black experiences)
- Visions of the Dusk*—Fenton Johnson (black author)
- Voices in the Mirror: An Autobiography*—Gordon Parks (black man)
- Voices of South Africa: Growing Up in a Troubled Land*—Carolyn Meyer (South Africans)
- Waiting for the Rain: A Novel of South Africa*—Sheila Gordon (black/white friendship)
- War Comes to Willie Freeman*—James L. and Christopher Collier (son of slave)
- The Weary Blues*—Langston Hughes (black poet)
- When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*—Paula J. Giddings (black women activists)
- White Man, Listen!*—Richard Wright (black writer)
- Why We Can't Wait*—Martin Luther King Jr. (African American culture)
- Wole Soyinka: Collection Plays 1*—Wole Soyinka (Nigerian playwright; winner of Pulitzer Prize)
- The Women and the Men*—Nikki Giovanni (black author)
- The Women of Brewster Place*—Gloria Naylor (black novelist)
- Words by Heart*—Ouida Sebestyen (race relations)
- The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.*—Coretta Scott King (compiler) (excerpts from speeches, sermons, and other writings)
- The Works of Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson*—Gloria Hull (Ed.) (black author)
- The World of Gwendolyn Brooks*—Gwendolyn Brooks (black author and Pulitzer Prize winner)