

2024 Black History Month Classroom Ideas

Introduction

This companion document is intended to provide you with multiple ways to engage with the 2024 Black History Month poster in your school and classroom. It is important to note that while we highlight the contributions of Black Canadians in February, educators should be embedding these ideas in our classrooms throughout the year. African Canadian history is part of our history as Canadians.

Part 1

This activity can be used as a whole school activity over the announcements or in an assembly. Appendix A and B provide the labelled descriptions for 12 of the symbols that can be found in the poster.

Part 2

These open-ended questions are intended for use in the classroom. They can be used on their own or in combination with one of the additional activities included in this document.

Part 3

These activities take the information that accompanies the poster and provides more fulsome activities that educators can use as lessons or assignments. Curriculum expectations that can be used for these activities are included in Appendix C.

Appendices

Appendix A and B

These appendices provide the annotated poster and descriptions of each symbol.

Appendix C

These curriculum connections provide additional ways that the poster connects to Ontario curriculum. This part highlights the front matter that is embedded within both the Language and Social Studies curriculum as well as specific expectations at various grade levels.

Appendix D

This is a non-exhaustive list of texts that can and should be used in classrooms throughout the year, not just in February to accompany the Black History Month poster.

Part 1: Suggested Announcement

Have you noticed the 2024 ETFO Black History Month poster up in our school? It is a transgenerational representation of the strength and style of Blackness. The accessories that both young people are wearing include a variety of symbols from across the African diaspora, past, present, and future, highlighting African Canadian contributions. Each day we will share one of 12 highlighted symbols with you over the announcements.

Example: Today's symbol is Africville, which is below the mask in the necklace worn by the person at the front on the poster. Africville was a thriving African Canadian community located outside Halifax, Nova Scotia. Sadly, it was demolished in the 1960s, causing the displacement of its community members.

For the educator: Please use the interactive poster to help find symbols. The annotated poster is also attached as Appendix A with the explanations included as Appendix B.

Part 2: Open-Ended Questions

Primary

When does this scene take place? Are there particular signs of the past, present, future?

Describe one of the two subjects (people) using their features (eyes, nose, hair, etc.).

Name and describe how different colours are used in the poster.

What colours did you notice in the Kente pattern earring?

Junior

What do you notice about our two subjects? Explain your thinking?

Who are our heroes? Write a creative narrative about one or both of them.

Name and describe the colours in the poster. How are colour and contrast used to tell a story?

What are the two cities that are pictured in the poster? Research the significance of Africville in Nova Scotia and Hogan's Alley in British Columbia.

Intermediate

When does this scene take place (past, present, future)? What visual elements has the artist included to show this? Explain.

In what ways do our heroes challenge or represent stereotypes?

Describe one of the two subjects (people) using their features (eyes, nose, hair, etc.).

Name and describe the colours in the poster. How is colour used to show contrast in the image?

What are the two communities that are pictured in the poster? Research the significance of Africville in Nova Scotia and Hogan's Alley in British Columbia.

Part 3: 2024 Black History Month Poster Information

Past, Present, Future: Symbols of Strength and Style

Concept

The 2024 ETFO Black History Month poster is a transgenerational representation of the strength and style of Blackness. The accessories that both young people are wearing include a variety of symbols from across the African diaspora, past, present, and future, highlighting African Canadian contributions. #BlackJoy is captured in the demeanor and beauty within this visual that is reflected in the Black community locally, provincially, nationally, and across the world.

Symbols of the Past

This poster features ancient, traditional African Adinkra symbols from West Africa that represent joy, liberation, and freedom. From Africa, we come closer to home with pendants from Africville in Halifax and a brooch from Hogan's Alley in Vancouver. These well-established African Canadian communities were both systematically destroyed starting in the 1960s, leading to the migration of many African Canadians to Ontario.

Activity

1. Adinkra symbols are hundreds of years old. Research five more Adinkra symbols and share their significance.
2. What are some examples of meaningful symbols in our world today? Reflecting on both your culture/ethnicity and Black culture within society, select five that are important to you personally. Share their significance in the manner of your choice (Prezi, written format, recorded audio, presentation, etc.).
3. Using a T-chart, create a comparison of symbols that are tied to brands or corporations versus those that are not.
 - a. Which was easier to think of? Why?
 - b. What are some possible symbols for values and concepts that are important to social justice and equity? Why were these chosen?



The Pan-African flag

Symbols of the Present

The impact of Black culture on popular culture is so palpable, the two are almost synonymous. Regardless of how many Black students or staff are in your local community, the influence of Black music, inventions, and creativity is present within your school. The inclusion of the Doctor Bird, the national bird of Jamaica, recognizes the influence of that country and the Caribbean in general on Canadian culture through mass migration in the 1960s and 1990s. The Legacy pendant is an acknowledgment of the Legacy Awards, a celebration of Canadian Black talent that airs annually on the CBC.

Activity

1. Research the history of African Canadian groups in your community.
 - a. What community groups exist?
 - b. What mentoring and role modelling aspects are present in these groups?
 - c. How long have they been established?
 - d. What contributions have African Canadians in your community made to society at large?
2. What are the Legacy Awards?
 - a. Why were these awards created?
 - b. The Legacy Awards are significant in Canadian culture regardless of your ethnicity. Centring your lived experience, share the impact of having the Legacy Awards focused on you, your classmates, and your local community.
 - c. *As an educator who may or may not have lived experience as an African Canadian, reflect on your answer to question b. Your ability to both reflect on and share how your identity impacts your answer can provide a great exemplar and model for your students.

Symbols of the Future

While there are various symbols present in the poster that honour Afro-futurism, the main thing we hope you see in this poster is a representation of the bright, joyous future that is possible for all young African Canadians. Learning more about the past contributions and recognizing the influence of Black culture all around us will contribute deeply to the understanding and consciousness needed to create a truly just, inclusive society.

Our two subjects' facial expressions deliberately represent what all students and people within our society seek: the ability to simply exist. They present this stylishly while ensuring the strength within themselves and the Black community shines through.

Create your own Poster Activity

Now it is your turn!

This poster is a broad diasporic perspective to the significance that African Canadians hold within our society in Ontario.

Create your own meaningful symbol collage. Reflect on your cultural heritage, identity, values, and concepts that are all valuable. This could be done from your perspective or the perspective of a famous African Canadian.

Possible heroes that you may choose include: MPP Jill Andrew, Jean Augustine, Lincoln Alexander, Viola Desmond, Alphonso Davies, Jilly Black, and lesser-known figures such as Millie Burgess (one of the first Black teachers in Canada), or CBC host Amanda Parris.

2024 Black History Month Poster Artist: Yung Yemi

Adeyemi Adegbesan is a Toronto-based multi-disciplinary artist whose practice aims to examine the intersectionality of Black identity. Reflecting on Black cultural ideologies from pre-colonial, colonial, present day, and future timelines; across regions, religions, varying levels of income and political lines, Adegbesan examines the dichotomy of the richness of Black experiences with the imposed societal homogeneity of "Blackness." Through his work, Adegbesan pulls from these varying elements to create Afro-futuristic portraits that embody themes of history, fantasy, speculative futures, and spirituality.

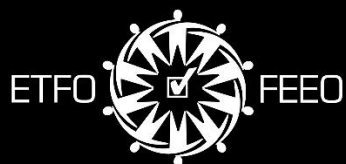
Adegbesan is a self-taught artist whose practice incorporates photography, mixed-media collage, murals, and assemblage. He works out of his studio in Toronto's Kensington Market neighborhood and has shown his work in Canada and the United States. He has also worked with brands such as HBO, Instagram, and the Toronto Raptors on commercial collaborations.

Appendix A

ETFO Black History Month
Past, Present, and Future: Symbols of Strength and Style



#BLACKJOY



Appendix B

Black History Month Symbols and Legend

| No. | Symbol | Description |
|-----|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Joy braided into hair | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Braids as a method of communication and expression - Myth of maps to freedom being braided into the hair of enslaved people |
| 2 | Nocta glide shoe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Related to hip hop and streetwear culture - Designed by Drake. - An emblem of Black Canadian culture |
| 3 | Basquiat crown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Famous pop culture image created by well-known Black artist Jean-Michel Basquiat - Symbol of black creativity and imagination |
| 4 | Doctor bird | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National symbol of Jamaica - Connection to ancestors |
| 5 | Red, Black and Green | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pan African colours, a symbol of solidarity for the African Diaspora |
| 6 | Hogan's Alley brooch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic Black community in Vancouver - In conjunction to the Africville reference demonstrates the presence of historic Black communities in Canada from coast to coast |
| 7 | Adinkra symbol mpuannum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ghanaian Adinkra - symbol for joy |
| 8 | Kente cloth pattern | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional fabric from West Africa featuring pan-African colours (red, green, black and gold) |
| 9 | Adinkra symbol fawohodie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ghanaian Adinkra symbol of freedom and independence |
| 10 | Legacy pendant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Represents the Legacy Awards that honour Black Canadian talent annually |
| 11 | African Mask | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symbol of masquerade culture - Tradition that connects many communities across the diaspora - Celebrated in Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, UK, and South America |
| 12 | Africville | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic Black community in Halifax, Nova Scotia, established in the 1840s & demolished in the 1960s - Once demolished, many displaced Nova Scotians moved to Ontario |

Appendix C

Curriculum Connections ¹

One barrier that has been historically expressed to engaging with new, diverse content is educators not always seeing the ways they can bring the curriculum to life. Below are a variety of excerpts from the curriculum that can aid in the creation of activities that may integrate this year's Black History Month poster. Some considerations for program planning can be found on page 22 of the curriculum document. The following are relevant excerpts and expectations from the Ontario curriculum.

*The following are from the front matter that can be found in the Language and Social Studies Curriculum.

English Language Learners in Ontario Schools

Ontario schools have some of the most multilingual student populations in the world. The first language of approximately 28 per cent of the students in Ontario's English-language schools is a language other than English. In addition, some students use varieties of English – sometimes referred to as dialects – that differ significantly from the English required for success in Ontario schools. Many English language learners were born in Canada and have been raised in families and communities in which languages other than English, or varieties of English that differ from the language used in the classroom, are spoken. Other English language learners arrive in Ontario as newcomers from other countries; they may have experience of highly sophisticated educational systems, or they may have come from regions where access to formal schooling was limited.

When they start school in Ontario, many of these students are entering a new linguistic and cultural environment. All teachers share in the responsibility for these students' English-language development.

As students who are learning English as a second or additional language in English-language schools, English language learners bring a rich diversity of background knowledge and experience to the classroom. These students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds not only support their learning in their new environment but also become a cultural asset in the classroom community. Effective teachers find positive ways to incorporate this diversity into their instructional programs and into the classroom environment.

¹ The Curriculum Connections is courtesy of the 2023 updated Ontario Curriculum

Most English language learners in Ontario schools have age-appropriate proficiency in their first language, as well as age-appropriate literacy skills. Although they need frequent opportunities to use English at school, they also derive important educational and social benefits from continuing to develop their first language while they are learning English. Teachers should encourage parents to continue to use their own language at home, both to preserve the language as part of their children's heritage and identity and to provide a foundation for their language and literacy development in English. It is also important for teachers to find opportunities to bring students' languages into the classroom, using parents and community members as a resource.

Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusive Education

A positive, inclusive, equitable, and non-discriminatory elementary and secondary school experience is vitally important to a student's personal, social, and academic development, to their future economic security, and to a realization of their full potential. Human rights principles recognize the importance of creating a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person, so that each person can contribute fully to the development and well-being of their community. Indeed, human rights law guarantees a person's right to equal treatment in education. It requires educators and school leaders to prevent and respond appropriately to discrimination and harassment, to create an inclusive environment, to remove barriers that limit the ability of students, and to provide accommodations, where necessary.

Ontario's education system, at all levels, must respect diversity, promote inclusive education, and work towards identifying and eliminating barriers to equal treatment in education that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Discriminatory biases, harassment, non-inclusive environments, lack of accommodation, systemic barriers, power dynamics, societal poverty, and racism make it difficult for students to acquire the skills they need to be successful, competitive, and productive members of society. Ontario schools aim to improve the academic outcomes and experiences of students who have traditionally not benefited from the promise of public education.

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, caregivers, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, disability, race, colour, religion, age, marital or family status, creed, gender identity/expression, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued when all members of the school community feel safe, welcomed, and accepted. Every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.

Research has shown that students who do not see themselves reflected in what they are learning, in their classrooms, and in their schools become disengaged and do not experience as great a sense of well-being or as high a level of academic achievement as those who do.

Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP)

In an inclusive education system, students must see themselves reflected in the curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences. Students need to experience teaching and learning that reflect their needs and who they are. To ensure that this happens, educators in Ontario schools embrace culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy (CRRP), which recognizes that all students learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity.

CRRP provides a framework for building positive environments, improving student responsibility and success, encouraging parent-school relationships, and building strong community connections. It also emphasizes that it is important for educators and school leaders to examine their own biases and to analyse how their own identities and experiences affect how they view, understand, and interact with all students. This can help to prevent discrimination, harassment, and the creation of poisoned environments. Educators are responsible for meaningful teaching and learning that recognizes and responds to who is in the classroom and the school.

By knowing “who our students are”, educators and leaders can tailor policies, programs, and practices to better meet the needs of their diverse student populations, to provide accommodation of the needs specified by human rights law, and to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed. CRRP involves recognizing that “culture” encompasses various aspects of social and personal identity. It also means acknowledging students’ multiple social and personal identities and the social issues that arise where identities intersect. The CRRP approach is designed to spark conversation and support educators and school leaders as they seek to implement effective equity strategies and policies. Educators are encouraged to engage in meaningful inquiry, in collaboration with colleagues, to address equity issues and the particular needs of the students they serve.

Implementing Principles of Inclusive Education

The implementation of inclusive education principles in education influences all aspects of school life. It promotes a school climate that encourages all students to work to high levels of achievement, affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students alike to value and how respect for diversity in the school and the broader society. Inclusive education promotes equity, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship. The absence of inclusive approaches to education can create discriminatory environments, in which certain individuals or groups cannot expect to receive fair treatment or an equitable experience based on aspects of their identity.

Teachers can give students a variety of opportunities to learn about diversity and diverse perspectives. By drawing attention to the contributions and perspectives of historically marginalized groups, and by creating opportunities for their experiences to be affirmed and valued, teachers can enable students from a wide range of backgrounds to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. It is essential that learning activities and materials used to support the curriculum reflect the diversity of Ontario society. In addition, teachers should differentiate instruction and assessment strategies to take into account the background and experiences, as well as the interests, aptitudes, and learning needs, of all students.

Media Literacy Curriculum Expectations

Digital Media Literacy (Grade 4)

A2

demonstrate and apply the knowledge and skills needed to interact safely and responsibly in online environments, use digital and media tools to construct knowledge, and demonstrate learning as critical consumers and creators of media

Community and Cultural Awareness (Grade 5)

A2.7

communicate and collaborate with various communities in a safe, respectful, responsible, and inclusive manner when using online platforms and environments, including digital and media tools, and demonstrate cultural awareness with members of the community

Media, Audience, and Production (Grade 6)

A2.5 demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between the form, message, and context of texts, the intended audience, and the purpose for production.

Media Literacy (Grade 7)

A2.4

evaluate the use of the various forms, conventions, and techniques of digital and media texts, consider the impact on the audience, and apply this understanding when analyzing and creating texts

Media Literacy (Grade 8)

A2.5

demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between the form, message, and context of texts, the intended and unintended audience, and the purpose for production

Social Studies Curriculum Expectations

A1. Application: Diversity, Inclusiveness, and Canadian Identities (Grade 6)

explain how various groups and communities, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, have contributed to the goal of inclusiveness in Canada (e.g., with reference to the efforts of women's rights, civil rights, *Indigenous*, or labour organizations, or of *advocacy organizations* for immigrants, disabled people, or various religious or ethnic groups; the Métis idea of and belief in respectful blending), and assess the extent to which Canada has achieved the goal of being an inclusive society (e.g., with reference to the policy of *multiculturalism*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, freedom of religion, the recognition of gay marriage, the ratification of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*)

A1.3 History (Grade 7)

analyse the displacement experienced by various groups and communities, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, who were living in or who came to Canada between 1713 and 1800 (e.g., the expulsion of the Acadians; the forced relocation experienced by many First Nations and/or Métis to reserves or different territories; the migration of Loyalists to various regions of Canada; the forced migration of African slaves to New France and British North America; the immigration of people to Canada seeking land, religious freedom, and/or work), and compare it with present-day examples of displacement (e.g., the relocation of a First Nation reserve community in Canada as a result of changing environmental or economic conditions; the experience of and services available to immigrants or refugees to Canada)

B1.2 (Grade 8)

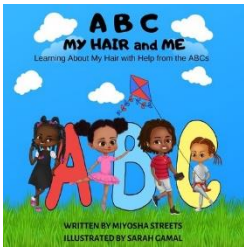
analyse how various factors have affected the economies of specific developed and developing countries around the world

Appendix D

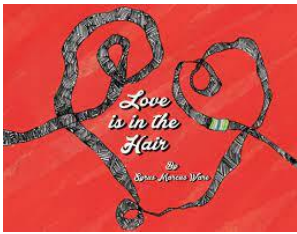
Resource List

All resources for younger grades can be used in older divisions.

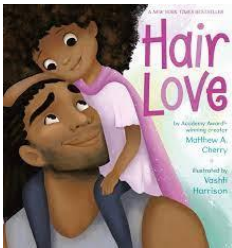
Primary Texts



ABC My Hair and Me, Miyosha Streets; Sarah Gamal, illus.



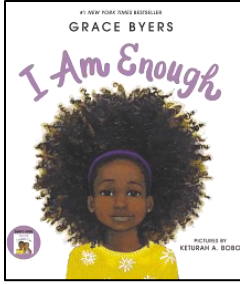
Love is in the Hair, Syrus Marcus Ware



Hair Love, Matthew A. Cherry; Vashti Harrison, illus.



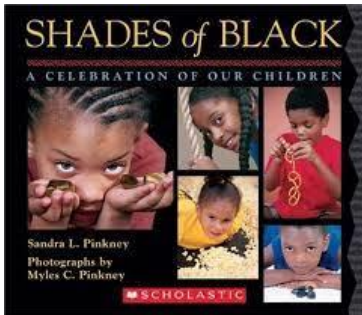
ABC I Love Me, Miriam Muhammad



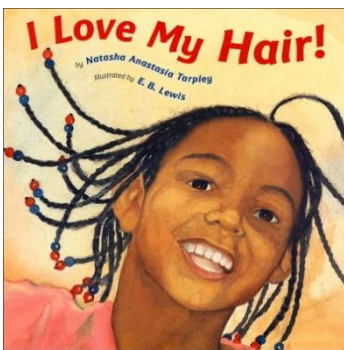
I Am Enough, Grace Byers; Keturah A. Bobo, illus.



Skin Like Mine, Latashia M. Perry; Bea Jackson, illus.



Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children, Sandra L. Pinkney; Myles C. Pinkney, photo.



I Love My Hair, Natasha Anastasia Tarpley; E.B. Lewis, illus.