



Ways to Celebrate Black History Month with Kids

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Believe it or not, Black History Month hasn't been around for so long. Officially recognized by American presidents in the 1970's, some communities and individuals had been celebrating African American contributions to our society and the world as early as the 1920's, but because much of the 20th century was mired in racial prejudice and the Civil Rights Movement, country-wide recognition didn't happen until fairly recently.

Most of us are already aware that the purpose of Black History Month is to celebrate the accomplishments and contributions African Americans have made for our society. However, in 2020, some people might be tempted to view the many ways in which our country has changed over the years, and to deem Black History Month as unneeded or irrelevant to our modern culture. While America has made huge strides over the years and decades, our work as a country is far from complete, and history should never be forgotten. The Importance of Celebrating Black History Month

Lonnie Bunch, Founding Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, said in his blog that "there is no more powerful force than a people steeped in their history", and that there is "no higher cause than honoring our struggle and ancestors by remembering". In his article, Bunch argues that Black History Month is just as important today as ever before because it preserves the memory of the past as well as the culture of an entire group of people. Moreover, it empowers members of that culture to retain their traditions while continuing to make a positive difference in the world.

Overall, teaching our children about Black History Month and about the many important African American influencers and contributors continues to move our society forward. Essentially, we are raising kids who will one day grow up and contribute to our society, hopefully in a positive way. By teaching them to respect the history, culture, and accomplishments of African Americans, they will be more aware and ultimately more tolerant of everyone within our highly diverse country.



Watch on [YouTube](#)

Civil Rights



Rosa Parks



Dr. King

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Why is Black History Month Celebrated in February?

You might have asked yourself out of curiosity: why is Black History Month in February? In fact, from whom or where did Black History month originate? To answer this, we must engage in a brief lesson in history.

It all began with historian Carter G. Woodson, who began what he called Negro History Week in February of 1926. He was a driven and passionate person who believed that all children should be educated about African American history. Woodson's entire purpose was to educate and highlight African American culture, and also to fight for equality through the positive celebration of black heroes.

The reason why he chose February was because the second week of February was birthday to both President Abraham Lincoln, and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Along with Woodson's work to create a week to celebrate black history, the 1920's brought with it a heightened interest in black culture, such as was seen in the Harlem Renaissance. In combination with movements throughout the United States, the idea of taking a period of time to celebrate black history began to catch on in many communities.

Afterwards, some communities adopted the entire month of February as an unofficial Black History Month, but it wasn't until 1976 when President Gerald Ford recognized it and encouraged Americans to participate in a month-long observance. Today, it still takes place in February, and serves as an important conversation point in schools and in our everyday lives.

[Kids Academy has a whole host of history resources, such as lessons, coloring pages, and worksheets that highlight the importance of African Americans! Subscribe to the Talented and Gifted app to start learning for free today!](#)

How to Celebrate Black History Month at Home

It's important to remember that the following ideas can be done throughout the year, and not just in February! As Americans, we should work to honor their contributions all the time. Sometimes, however, it's important to take time out to focus and remember the purpose of doing that, which makes February a great time, too. Try the following ideas to reinforce Black History Month and its importance with your kids:

Check out the local children's museum

If you live near a large city, chances are it has a children's museum. If that's the case, and even if you have already visited the museum with your children before, check out the exhibits and programming it has available for the month of February. Many children's

museums offer themed days or special exhibits to honor holidays and Black History Month is no exception!

Study African American culture and recipes

One of the best ways to get to know a culture is by making and enjoying their food! Take a dive into African-inspired cuisine and find dishes to try with your family. Decide upon a few recipes to make with your child and encourage him or her to get in on the fun making the dish with your guidance! Try to make one meal per week throughout the month to celebrate African American culture.

Study influential African Americans based upon your child's own interests

For example, does your child love music? Art? Or reading? Whatever it is your child is passionate about, honor Black History Month by using it as a catalyst to study black culture. For example, if your child is musically inclined, talk about jazz and listen to Duke Ellington or Miles Davis. If your child loves to read, find children's books authored by or about African Americans. For older kids, read and discuss poems by Langston Hughes or Maya Angelou.

Check out other local kid-friendly events in your town

Many public libraries, museums, and playhouses offer classes, story time events or other activities based upon topic. There's no doubt that there is something happening in your area to celebrate Black History in February. Go see a play, or view African American art. Use the web to check out your local venues and programming to plan your month!

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Ways to Celebrate Black History Month in the Classroom

If you're a teacher, you know how important and valuable it is to tie Black History Month lessons in with your curriculum. Try the following fresh ideas for schools to help your students honor African American history.:

Turn your classroom into a museum

Create a project and instruct students to study a prominent figure in black history. Give students a list of notable figures that they probably haven't heard of before but have fascinating backgrounds and history. Some examples include Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, who invented the open-heart surgery in 1893, or Jean-Michel Basquiat, a brilliant artist who invented graffiti. Allow students to research their chosen figure and create an

“exhibit” that can be showcased in your classroom. Make space in the classroom for students to set up their exhibits and display them for the school. Invite other classes and task kids with explaining their exhibit to others. Make it even more fun by encouraging kids to dress up!

Create a virtual museum

If you are unable to turn the classroom physically into a museum, make one online, or at least compile exhibits electronically from students! [Thirteen.org](https://www.thirteen.org) offers intriguing student examples of virtual museums about remembering slavery and the making of America. Use the examples as a guide, and utilize the template provided by the website to instruct your own students to do the same!

Study stepping and traditional African American songs

You don't have to be a music teacher to teach students about the history and culture of stepping, but it would work perfectly for music class, too! Stepping is a traditional form of African American dance that engages the entire body to make sounds and rhythms. Study its history and host a stepping contest in your classroom! Alternatively, study the role of freedom songs in the Civil Rights Movement. In particular, activist Fannie Lou Hamer is known for singing songs like “This Little Light of Mine” during marches or civil rights protests.

Host a poetry night (or day!)

Students can study poetry, even at a young age! Create a list of African American poets and meaningful kid-appropriate poems. Assign students to study a poem and recite it for the class, or invite other classes, and even parents! Teach students about poetry readings beforehand and discuss what happens during performances. Let them plan and practice their performance, and encourage kids to dress up, and make programs as a class. Set the mood by dimming the lights, selecting a student emcee, and playing soft jazz music in between poems.

Recreate freedom posters from the Civil Rights Movement

Teach your students about the Freedom Movement. This included historic events, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycotts or what became known as the Freedom Rides. Check out [this website](#) to view fascinating and powerful posters from the era. Instruct students to recreate freedom posters or make one of their own in a similar style. Make a project of it and hang them in the hall for other classes to view!

Black History Month is an excellent time to study the many contributions that African Americans have made to our country's history and for our society. Don't forget that February shouldn't be the only time this year that your children study these accomplishments! Continue lessons about prominent black historical figures and their

accomplishments throughout the year! Whether you're a teacher or a parent, start by selecting a few of the above ideas to get started, and make this February one your kids will always remember!

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