



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of *A World of Difference*® Institute, ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Lillian's Right to Vote

Jonah Winter (Author) and Shane W. Evans
(Illustrator)

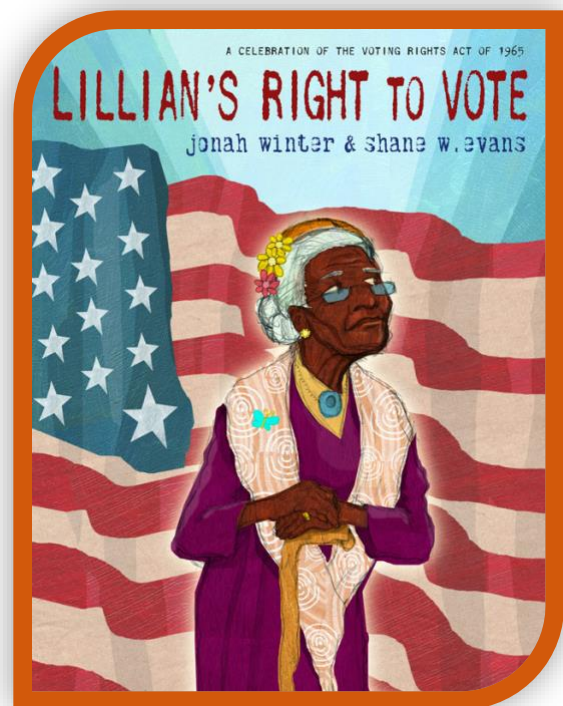
An elderly African American woman, on her way to vote, remembers her family's tumultuous voting history. As Lillian makes a "long haul up a steep hill" to her polling place, she sees more than trees and sky—she sees her family's history. She sees the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment and her great-grandfather voting for the first time. She sees her parents trying to register to vote. And she sees herself marching in a protest from Selma to Montgomery. This book recalls the battle for civil rights in the U.S. in an account of one woman's fierce determination to make it up the hill and make her voice heard.

ISBN: 978-0385390286

Publisher: Schwartz & Wade

Year Published: 2015

Age Range: 5–9



Book Themes

Voting rights, Civil Rights Movement, Race and Racism, Activism

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point

out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#) which include some differentiated definitions for younger children.

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|----------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| ▪ auction | ▪ history | ▪ pride | ▪ tax |
| ▪ bigotry | ▪ injustice | ▪ protest | ▪ vote |
| ▪ Constitution | ▪ judges | ▪ register | |
| ▪ equal | ▪ justice | ▪ slavery | |

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some/all of these pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- What can you tell about the person on the cover and who do you think she is?
- What do you think the book might be about?
- Who are the authors of this book and why do you think they wanted to write it?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers.

- How is Edmund related to Lillian? (page 6)
- What happened in 1920? (page 12)
- Why did people walk from Selma to Montgomery? (page 21)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What is the book about?
- What does Lillian see throughout her 100 years of life?
- Why is Lillian climbing up a hill? What is the hill a symbol for?
- How come some people are allowed to vote and others are not?
- What are some of the obstacles to voting you read about in the book? Do you know about any obstacles to voting today?
- What does voting have to do with civil rights?
- What are some of the feelings you noticed by Lillian's ancestors throughout the book? How do you know?
- Why did protestors march from Selma to Montgomery, AL?
- How does Lillian feel when she's at the top of the hill?
- What did you learn about voting by reading this book?
- What does the book have to do with racism and equality/equity?

- Why do you think the author wrote a book about voting? Why is voting so important?
- What do you think is the overall message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Illustrate Favorite Scene

With students, brainstorm a list of scenes from the book that students liked or found impactful (e.g. when Lillian sees her great-great grandparents on an auction block during slavery, when Lillian sees her great-grandpa voting for the first time after the Fifteenth Amendment is passed, when Lillian sees people marching from Selma to Montgomery to fight for voting rights). After compiling a list of scenes, have students select one of the scenes that they find most compelling that reflects a time in history regarding voting rights. Based on their selected scene, have students draw the scene and write a few pieces of dialogue and/or thoughts of the people featured in their drawing. If most of the scenes of the book are covered by their illustrations, create a new book with all of the students' drawings together or display them in order on the bulletin board.

2. Learn about Voting Rights

Read aloud some or all of the "Author's Note" on pages 32-33 to learn more about the history of voting rights and about Lillian Allen, for whom the book was inspired. Explain to students that voting rights is a very important part of African American history and civil rights. Engage students in a brief discussion about the importance of voting. Share some or all of the following information:

- Before the Civil War, African American people were almost totally prevented from voting in the U.S. Other groups of people (Latinos, Native Americans, women and Asian Americans) faced similar obstacles to voting in different parts of the country.
- Even after the enactment of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1870, which gave all men regardless of race, color or previous condition of slavery the right to vote, many states continued to use various methods to prevent people of color from voting—like requiring voters to pass literacy tests or enacting poll taxes (i.e., money they have to pay).
- In 1965, a major voting rights campaign, including marches and demonstrations that received national attention, led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), which protected the voting rights of people of color. The Voting Rights Act prevented states from passing laws that would discriminate against people of color.
- By the end of 1965, 250,000 new African-American voters had been registered. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is considered to be one of the main achievements of the Civil Rights era one of the most effective pieces of civil rights legislation in history.
- In modern times, there are still problems with voting rights. Over the past few years, several states passed laws that limit certain people's ability to vote, primarily African Americans, Latinos, young people and elderly voters.

After reviewing this history, have younger students write a letter (to family members, the school or local newspaper) with their thoughts about voting rights. Have older students (in pairs or small groups) create a timeline based on the history of voting rights, that also includes elements of Lillian's story. Instead of making a traditional timeline with a straight line, have students consider having the timeline be a hill to match the hill that Lillian climbed in the book.

3. What is an Activist?

Ask students: *What is an activist? What examples of activism did you see in the book?* Remind students about the part of the book (pages 20-25) where a large group of people engaged in a protest march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to fight for the right to vote, leading to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Explain to students that activists get involved in different kinds of activities where they work to change something they think is unfair or unjust. If time permits, brainstorm a list of current day issues that are important to students that are happening at their school, in their community or state/country, a situation in which they feel an injustice is taking place. Engage students in a discussion about doing something about that situation. Discuss possible strategies that are modest and age-appropriate; you can consult the [10 Ideas for Teaching Black History Month](#) for ideas. If time permits, implement some of these ideas or connect to a local organization that works on an issue of interest and take steps to actively involve students.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on voting rights, race and racism and the Civil Rights Movement.

Curriculum Resources

10 Ideas for Teaching Black History Month, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/10-ideas-for-teaching-black-history-month.

Experience with Race and Racism, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/experiences-with-race-and-racism.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights: Relevance for Today, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/martin-luther-king-jr-and-civil-rights-relevancy-for.

The Selma to Montgomery March for Voting Rights, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/the-selma-to-montgomery-march-for-voting-rights.

Websites

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism

A list of ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These strategies can be acted upon individually, organized together as a group and young people can join with a larger effort that is taking place locally or nationally.

Black History Month

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/black-history-month

A list of lesson plans and resources to help you teach about black history in your classroom.

Civil Rights Movement

www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/civil-rights-movement

Provides historical background information, resources and pictures about the Civil Rights Movement.

A Good Day for Civil Rights in the Courts

www.adl.org/blog/a-good-day-for-civil-rights-in-the-courts

A background resource on enactments, legislation and noteworthy decisions promoting justice and fair treatment and the protection of civil and voting rights for minorities.

Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about

Suggestions and strategies for having classroom conversations with young people about race and racism.

Teaching about Elections

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/teaching-about-elections

Elections provide great opportunities to teach students about civics, how government works, the electoral process, current events and issues, historical context and campaign politics. This page provides education resources, lesson plans and other election-related pedagogical content to assist you in teaching about elections.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

People Identity & Culture: Black, African American, Caribbean, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[205\]=205](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[205]=205)

Social Justice: Civil Rights, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[232\]=232](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[232]=232)

Race & Racism: [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid\[217\]=217&tid\[218\]=218&tid\[219\]=219&tid\[220\]=220&tid\[221\]=221](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid[217]=217&tid[218]=218&tid[219]=219&tid[220]=220&tid[221]=221)