

Black History Month 2023 - The English Department Recommends...

Mr Coolin: *Empireland* by Sathnam Sanghera. This book demonstrates how so much of what we consider to be modern Britain is actually rooted in our imperial past. The British Empire ran for centuries and covered vast swathes of the world. It is, as Sanghera reveals, fundamental to understanding Britain. However, even among those who celebrate the empire there seems to be a desire not to look at it too closely - not to include the subject in our school history books, not to emphasise it too much in our favourite museums.



Miss Williamson: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. Arguably the greatest African novel of the 20th century and one of the first to explore colonialism from a black perspective. Okonkwo is the greatest warrior alive but when he accidentally kills a clansman, things begin to fall apart. Okonkwo returns from exile to find colonists have arrived in his village and his life hurtles towards tragedy. Not just a novel about colonisation but also a poignant examination of the relationship between fathers and sons.



Mr Jamison: *A Portable Paradise* by Roger Robinson. Winner of the 2020 T.S. Eliot Prize for poetry, this collection deals not only with race and prejudice, but also with the concept of paradise and how we might find it in ourselves, in poems which are well crafted and lively.



Mrs Bridgeworth: *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead follows the story of Elwood Curtis who is about to enrol in the local black college, but one innocent mistake leads to alter the course of his life. Elwood arrives at The Nickel Academy, a place which aims to equip inmates to become 'honourable and honest men'. The reality is much more horrific; Elwood and his new friend Turner have to fight to survive. Whilst this book explores the tensions of the Civil Rights movement, it also provides a gateway to help us understand the current realities and issues in the United States.



Mrs Phillips-Grey: *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize, *Beloved* is set just after the American Civil War and explores the impact of both slavery and abolition on a young mother called Sethe. It is a surreal, gritty and at times disturbing novel which forces us to consider difficult moral questions and reflect on what we might have done in the same situation.



Miss Isle: *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge. Award-winning journalist Eddo-Lodge provides a powerful exploration of what it's like to be a person of colour living in Britain today, discussing issues from eradicated black history to the purpose of systemically engrained political white dominance.



Mr Evans: *One of Them - an Eton College Memoir* by Musa Okwonga Musa Okwonga - a young Black man who grew up in a predominantly working-class town - was not your typical Eton College student. Woven throughout this deeply personal and unflinching memoir of his five years at Eton in the 1990s is a present-day narrative which engages with much wider questions about pressing social and political issues: privilege, the distribution of wealth, the rise of the far right in the UK, systemic racism, the 'boys' club' of government and the power of the few to control the fate of the many. *One of Them* is both an intimate account and a timely exploration of race and class in modern Britain.

