

# BIPOC BOOKS

Looking carefully at the books in your home library or borrowed library books. Start with the last 10 you've read. How many books were written and/or illustrated by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)?

Not sure? Find out by doing a Google search using the author's and illustrator's names and finding reliable sources like their professional website to see how they identify.

Continue asking questions as you make your way through the books.

- How many books have an animal as the main character?
- How many books have BIPOC as main characters or supporting characters in the story?
- How many books don't have any BIPOC characters at all and instead focus on white characters?
- How are BIPOC represented in the stories?
- Are stories with Black characters written about slavery, civil rights or other hardships? These are all valuable stories but a book that celebrates Black joy will allow your child to look at a whole, relatable person rather than always focusing on their history of oppression.

Adults should go through their own books, too! Model for your child the value of BIPOC stories and experiences and the importance of including those stories in your home library or with the books that you borrow.

After completing this activity, which could take more than one sitting but is important to revisit, choose to be curious about your findings and think critically about what you've discovered. Talk with older kids about **white dominant culture** and **cultural racism**, the way our society centers the white experience in stories and media to the advantage of white folk, resulting in a form of oppression that continues to shape the way that we as a society view BIPOC.

How does this impact the books that are published in the United States each year? How does the selection of published books you have to choose from influence the books you read?

What about the books at the library? Do we consider all of this? Yes! We did a similar diversity audit of new youth and YA books earlier this year. Did the numbers of BIPOC authors align to the racial composition of our service community, which is 36% Black? No, and especially not in the nonfiction and graphic novel collections. So how do we fix that? We continue to seek out BIPOC book creators and think of solutions to best serve everyone in our community. Do you want to guess the second most common race for YA authors in our collection after white? Asian! Why? Because manga is so popular and is created primarily by Japanese authors and illustrators. Your choices influence what we purchase too. Be sure to help us know what you want to read by using our [materials suggestion form](#).

Remember, even with the limited number of books by BIPOC creators, we all have choices. The books that you choose to read and share with your child can be one small step on your journey of anti-racism because the only way to undo racism is to identify it and dismantle it.

If you have an older child, work together on the project. Depending on your child's age, let them help with the research or tallying the results and turning your findings into a graph.

When you look at an author's or illustrator's web page, use your critical thinking skills.

- Did everyone identify their race or ethnicity? Who doesn't? Why do you think they don't?
- Did anything surprise you? Did you make an assumption based on a photo and then learn more by reading the person's? Why might that happen?