This Coretta Scott King Book Awards Discussion Guide is prepared by the 2016 Coretta Scott King Book Awards Jury Chair Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop and members Sam Bloom, Dr. Christina H. Dorr, Ruth Newell, April Roy, Dr. Barbara S. Spears, and Ida W. Thompson.

The activities and discussion topics are developed to encompass state school standards. These standards equally apply to students from all linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Students will demonstrate their proficiency, skills, and knowledge of subject matter in accordance with national and state standards. Please refer to the US Department of Education website, www.ed.gov, for detailed information.

The Coretta Scott King Book Award: A Living Legend

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards have grown since their conception in the late 1960s. At a dinner gala of the New Jersey Library Association in May 1970, Lillie Patterson was honored for her biography *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Man of Peace*. In 1972, the first Coretta Scott King Book Awards breakfast was held at an ALA conference site. Official affiliation with the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) came in 1980, and in 1982, the American Library Association recognized the Coretta Scott King Award as an association award. During the 2003 ALA midwinter meeting, the Coretta Scott King Task Force joined the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT). The affiliation with EMIERT gave the group a new name: the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee. Success of the committee can be attributed to

For more than forty years, books by African American writers and artists have been honored by receiving the Coretta Scott King Book Award. This award promotes understanding and appreciation of African American culture and the culture of all peoples. The award is designed to commemorate the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and to honor Mrs. Coretta Scott King for her courage and determination to continue the work for peace and world brotherhood. The multidimensional characteristics of the authors’ and illustrators’ works reflect the African American experience from both the historical and contemporary perspectives. Opportunities to celebrate the rich and powerful experiences depicted in these books lie in the hands of the adults in children’s and young adults’ lives.

This discussion guide is, therefore, dedicated to those teachers, parents, librarians, booksellers, and caregivers who are committed to enriching the lives of children and young adults with quality literature. Among their many other functions, book awards provide a simple means for casual browsers in bookstores, libraries, and schools to find material that is engaging, well crafted, and satisfying both emotionally and intellectually. The Coretta Scott King Book Awards particularly introduce the best in African American literature to all children. The award now graces dozens of titles, from picture books for the smallest children to novels and nonfiction for teenagers. In this guide, we have examined some of these titles from different angles and perspectives.
Coretta Scott King Book Award
Author Award
GONE CRAZY IN ALABAMA
Written by Rita Williams-Garcia
Published by Amistad
An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

Coretta Scott King Book Award
Author Honor Award
ALL AMERICAN BOYS
Written by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
Published by Caitlyn Dlouhy Books/Atheneum
An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing

Coretta Scott King Book Award
Author Honor Award
THE BOY IN THE BLACK SUIT
Written by Jason Reynolds
Published by Caitlyn Dlouhy Books/Atheneum
An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing

Coretta Scott King Book Award
Author Honor Award
X: A NOVEL
By Ilyasah Shabazz and Kekla Magoon
Published by Candlewick Press

Coretta Scott King Book Award
Illustrator Award
TROMBONE SHORTY
Illustrated by Bryan Collier
Written by Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews
Published by Abrams Books for Young Readers
An imprint of ABRAMS
Coretta Scott King Award
Illustrator Honor Award
THE BOOK ITCH: FREEDOM, TRUTH, & HARLEM’S GREATEST BOOKSTORE
Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie
Written by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson
Published by Carolrhoda Books
A Division of Lerner Publishing Group

Coretta Scott King Award
Illustrator Honor Award
LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET
Illustrated by Christian Robinson
Written by Matt de la Peña
Published by G.P. Putnam’s Sons BFYR
An imprint of Penguin Young Readers

Coretta Scott King Award
John Steptoe Award for New Talent Author Winner
HOODOO
Written by Ronald L. Smith
Published by Clarion Books
An imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books for Young Readers

Coretta Scott King Award
John Steptoe Award for New Talent Illustrator Winner
VOICE OF FREEDOM; FANNIE LOU HAMER, SPIRIT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Illustrated by Ekua Holmes
Written by Carole Boston Weatherford
Published by Candlewick Press
GONE CRAZY IN ALABAMA
By Rita Williams-Garcia
Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern are spending the summer with their grandmother, great-grandmother and other family members in Alabama. They discover that the rural South is very different from Brooklyn and that families can be much more complicated than they seem. A near-tragedy brings the whole family together, reassuring Delphine that things do not fall apart. The novel is full of the details of daily living in a southern Black community in the late sixties. Vivid writing, humor, and superb characterization make this a worthy conclusion to the Gaither girls’ trilogy.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• In Gone Crazy in Alabama, some memorable features of the girls’ visit were chickens, cows, pecans, the KKK, Creek Indians and secrets. Where do your relatives live, and what are some of your memories from visiting them?

• In the book, Delphine, Vonetta and Fern were siblings. How many siblings do you have? Have you ever felt bullied by a sister or brother? What was the most difficult disagreement that you had with them? How did you resolve the problem?

• Fern/Afua’s poem appears on page 239. In the poem Fern has taken a stand on a subject that she feels passionate about: meat. Write a poem on a subject that you feel passionate about, such as politics, family, food, bullies, school, etc.

• Food is important in the story and brings family together. What is a favorite dish in your family? What are the ingredients needed to cook it? Choose a leader and work as a team with your classmates to compile a cookbook based on your favorite family recipes.

RELATED CSK TITLES

Brown Girl Dreaming, by Jacqueline Woodson (Nancy Paulsen Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers)

How I Discovered Poetry, by Marilyn Nelson (Dial Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers)

One Crazy Summer, by Rita Williams-Garcia (Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins)

The Watsons Go to Birmingham –1963, by Christopher Paul Curtis (Delacorte)
TROMBONE SHORTY
Illustrated by Bryan Collier
Written by Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews
Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of ABRAMS

Bryan Collier creates vibrant, bold color collages and realistic images that portray the musical growth of a young boy in the jazz tradition of the Tremé neighborhood of New Orleans. Collier’s illustrations combined with Andrews’ lyrical, autobiographical text give readers a glimpse into the story of a boy working to make his dreams come true against the vibrant backdrop of the city he loves.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS


• What did you learn about the kind of person Trombone Shorty is? What was there about him that made it possible for him to make his dream come true?

• Bryan Collier used collage to illustrate this book and created layered pictures that tell the story of New Orleans. Create a collage that tells a story of where you live.

• Music was very important to Trombone Shorty’s life. Listen to some of his music and write an essay or create a picture to show how it makes you feel.

• Bryan Collier uses symbols throughout this book to represent dreams, New Orleans and sound. Read the illustrator’s note in the back of the book and think about a symbol that represents you, your family or your home and draw a picture of it.

RELATED CSK TITLES

Before John was a Jazz Giant, by Carole Boston Weatherford, Illustrated by Sean Qualls (Henry Holt and Company)

Jazz, by Walter Dean Myers, Illustrated by Christopher Meyers (Holiday House, Inc.)

Little Melba and Her Big Trombone, by Katheryn Russell-Brown, Illustrated by Frank Morrison (Lee and Low Books Inc.)

Uptown, by Bryan Collier (Henry Holt, an imprint of Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group)
Somebody had drawn a chopped-off hand, with long, nasty fingernails.

I took a deep breath. Underneath the hand, in big black letters, it said:

**MAIN DE GLOIRE**

I swallowed.

I didn’t want to look—didn’t want to know nothing about it—but I read down the page, sounding out the words:

Let all who seek know the power of the talisman. Mandragore, derived from the mandrake root, a corruption of the French *Main de Gloire*, which is to say “the Hand of Glory.”

That was it. That’s what the Stranger was looking for. But what did it have to do with me? I let out a breath and kept reading:
Hoodoo
By Ronald L. Smith
Clarion Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books for Young Readers

Hoodoo is the rich, moody tale of a boy trying to ward off an evil spirit in 1930s small-town Alabama. When the menacing Stranger comes to town, Hoodoo Hatcher must use the folk magic passed down in his extended family to save the day. Smith’s multi-layered narrative is heavy with southern gothic atmosphere and features a dynamic first-person voice.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
• How does Hoodoo Hatcher change as the book progresses?
• Hoodoo takes place in the 1930s during the Great Depression. What do you know about that time period? In what ways does this time period impact both the characters and story?
• Hoodoo’s family uses folk magic to protect themselves and bring good luck. Make a list of all the superstitions you can think of; choose one and describe why you do or do not believe in it.
• Hoodoo has a vision where a crow speaks to him. Why do you think the author chose this particular bird to appear in Hoodoo’s vision? Research the crow and write a brief essay about the bird.

RELATED CSK TITLES
The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural, by Patricia McKissack, Illustrated by Brian Pinkney (Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of Random House Books for Young Readers)

Elijah of Buxton, by Christopher Paul Curtis (Scholastic)

Zora and Me, by Victoria Bond & T.R. Simon (Candlewick Press)

The People Could Fly: The Picture Book, by Virginia Hamilton, Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon (Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of Random House Books for Young Readers)

Bud, Not Buddy, Christopher Paul Curtis (Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House Books for Young Readers)
VOICE OF FREEDOM: FANNIE LOU HAMER, SPIRIT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Illustrated by Ekua Holmes
Written by Carole Boston Weatherford
Candlewick Press

In a powerful and colloquial voice, Weatherford’s first person poems lead us from the cotton fields of Fannie Lou Hamer’s Mississippi childhood to her participation in the 1968 Democratic National Convention. They reveal her unwavering determination to secure African American voting rights in the face of poverty, racism, violence, and political dirty tricks. Ekua Holmes’s strikingly vivid collage art captures Hamer’s resilient spirit. The copious splashes of yellow throughout appear to evoke Hamer’s “theme song,” the famous spiritual This Little Light of Mine.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• How would you characterize Mrs. Hamer? What words can you use to describe her? Do you think she was a hero? Why or why not?

• The color yellow is prominent in the illustrations of this book. Why do you suppose the illustrator made that choice? What do you think it represents? What color would you choose as the main one to illustrate a story about you? Why?

• In order to vote in Mississippi, Mrs. Hamer had to take tests that were difficult or impossible for ordinary people to pass. Find out what a person in your state has to do in order to vote. Do the rules seem fair to you? Do they seem to make it hard for some people to vote? Defend your answer.

• Search the internet to find a recording of Mrs. Hamer singing “This Little Light of Mine.” Listen and talk about what you think it means to let your light shine. What do you think that song meant to her?

• If you could meet Mrs. Hamer today, what would you say to her? What questions would you have for her? Write down your thoughts and compare them to those of your classmates.

RELATED CSK TITLES
March Book Two, by John Lewis & Andrew Aydin, Illustrated by Nate Powell (Top Shelf Productions)
Martin’s Big Words, by Doreen Rappaport, Illustrated by Bryan Collier (Hyperion)
Let It Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters, by Andrea Pinkney, Illustrated by Stephen Alcorn (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
ALL AMERICAN BOYS
By Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely
Caitlyn Dlouhy Books/Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing

Two boys—one black (Rashad), one white (Quinn)—are drawn together by an act of police brutality in this emotionally charged novel. While witnessing the violent attack on Rashad, Quinn is shocked to see that the white police officer is his friend and father figure, Paul. As Rashad recovers from the beating in the hospital, the city splits along racial lines amid simmering tensions. Reynolds and Kiely use alternating point-of-view to give this unforgettable book a sense of raw immediacy.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
• Why do you think the authors chose to tell the story from two perspectives? Do you think the authors’ choice of point-of-view works? Why or why not?
• What are your thoughts on Quinn’s responsibilities? Did he have an obligation to notify the police about what he saw outside the bodega?
• Do you consider Quinn racist? Why or why not?
• Are there any characters you want to know more about? Should the authors have included more about Paul? About Rashad’s father? If so, what?
• How has this book changed your perceptions of the issue of police brutality?

RELATED CSK TITLES
Lockdown, by Walter Dean Myers
(Amidstad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers)

Monster, by Walter Dean Myers
(Amidstad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers)

Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty, by G. Neri, Illustrated by Randy DuBurke (Lee & Low Books)
The Boy in the Black Suit

Jason Reynolds

Author of When I Was the Greatest
THE BOY IN THE BLACK SUIT
By Jason Reynolds
Caitlyn Dlouhy Books/Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing

Matt Miller’s world has been changed forever by the untimely death of his mother. His isolation as he struggles to cope with this tremendous loss forces him to make hard decisions, both for himself and his father, struggles to face the family’s new reality. His choice of a most unusual job at the neighborhood funeral home helps him grieve while discovering more about himself and his community. Matt’s quiet determination and venture into a romantic friendship balance the hardships of his life with the prospects of an expectant future.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Matt’s loss of his mother and his quest to deal with this tremendous change in his life is the central theme of this story. Matt chose a unique way to deal with his loss rather than reaching out to others for help. Research agencies or support groups in your community that deal with grief counseling and support. Are there special services for young adults? If not, how might you work to bring attention to this?

• What is the symbolism of the black suit that Matt wears? While he could have chosen to change his clothes after school, he dressed in the black suit each day. What insights does it give about his situation and how he is responding to it? Is he hiding? Does it make him feel powerful?

• Matt initially seeks a job at the Cluck Bucket. How might the story have changed if he had gotten the job? Would his relationship with Lovey have been different? What role do you think Mr. Ray would have played in Matt’s life?

• Mr. Ray’s visibility and influence in the community were apparent. Do you think his relationship with Matt was unique? Were there other young people he was mentoring? Is there someone like Mr. Ray in your community?

• Matt and his mother shared a love of cooking, as evidenced by the cooking notebook she made for him. Interview your family members and collect their favorite recipes and cooking tips. Record them making the dish. Share them with family and friends through a website, YouTube or published book. Challenge family members to prepare these dishes during special gatherings.

RELATED CSK TITLES
How It Went Down, by Kekla Magoon (Henry Holt, an imprint of Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group)
Locomotion, by Jacqueline Woodson (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, a division of Penguin Books for Young Readers)
Miracle’s Boys, by Jacqueline Woodson (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, a division of Penguin Books for Young Readers)
X: A NOVEL
By Ilyasah Shabazz and Kekla Magoon
Candlewick Press

Based on Malcolm X’s writings and family lore, this powerful, introspective first person historical novel spans his life from his childhood through his conversion to Islam while in prison. Making liberal use of figurative language, the authors continuously expose the clash between Malcolm’s morals and the life he seeks. They weave words, actions, and feelings into a tale that is both spiritual and gritty, revealing Malcolm’s journey into the power of reading, books, knowledge, and introspection. An author’s note completes Malcolm’s life story.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• How are Malcolm’s feelings toward his family and upbringing a part of his teenage and adult years?
• How does Malcolm’s father’s legacy both propel him forward, and haunt, him?
• How does Malcolm’s incarceration force him to reconsider the life path he had chosen?
• How can the perspective of a family member make a story more authentic? Or does the inherent bias make it less authentic? Defend your answer through textual evidence.
• Compare and contrast X: A Novel with The Autobiography of Malcolm X. What can you learn from one that you can’t from the other?

RELATED CSK TITLES

Hand in Hand: Ten Black Men Who Changed America, Andrea David Pinkney (Disney/Jump at the Sun Books, an imprint of Disney Book Group)

Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary, by Walter Dean Myers (Scholastic)

Now is Your Time: The African American Struggle for Freedom, by Walter Dean Myers (Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers)
Lewis Michaux, Jr. tells the story of the National Memorial African Bookstore, which his father built into a community institution in Harlem. Working in the store with his father, Lewis got to meet both the ordinary and the famous people who frequented the store. He also came to understand and admire his father’s desire to uplift others and his commitment to the power of words and reading. The bold, expressive illustrations capture both the look and feel of the bookstore and of Harlem during the bookstore’s heyday.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Lewis Michaux had a “book itch.” He believed strongly that he just had to make books accessible to Black people. What were some of the obstacles he had to overcome? What kind of character traits does it take to make something happen in spite of obstacles?

• Some of the people who came into the store, such as Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, and Langston Hughes, were famous. Choose one of those men and do research to find out about their lives and their achievements; learn why they were famous.

• Lewis Michaux Sr. made up many sayings about books, education, and learning. One example is, “Don’t get took! Read a book!” Choose one of his sayings from the end pages and explain what you think it means. Try to come up with a saying of your own about books or reading. Create a poster featuring your saying.

• The National Memorial African Bookstore was more than just a bookstore. What were some of the things that made the bookstore “one-of-a-kind”?

• Why do you think the author chose the subtitle, Freedom, Truth & Harlem’s Greatest Bookstore?

RELATED CSK TITLES

*Harlem*, by Walter Dean Myers, Illustrated by Christopher Myers (Scholastic Press)

*In Daddy’s Arms I am Tall: African Americans Celebrating Fathers*, by various poets, Illustrated by Javaka Steptoe (Lee and Low Books)

*No Crystal Stair*, by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson, Illustrated by Gregory Christie (Carolrhoda Lab™, an imprint of Carolrhoda Books, a division of Lerner Publishing Group)
CJ and his Nana ride the bus every Sunday after church, but this week CJ is full of questions. Nana’s wise answers help CJ to change the way he looks at his surroundings and the people they meet along the way. Peña’s lyrical language and Robinson’s bright expressive illustrations result in the celebration of a community rich in diversity and harmony.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Have you ever had a day when it was raining and gloomy outside and you could not go out and play? How did that make you feel? What did you do to change your mood?

• Have you ever wished for something that you could not have? What made you want it? How did you make yourself feel all right about not getting it? How did Nana help CJ feel better?

• Nana helped CJ see beauty that he hadn’t noticed. Where do you find beauty even when it is in the midst of unpleasant or ugly surroundings? Give an example.

• CJ and Nana volunteer to serve at the soup kitchen. Find out if there are places in your neighborhood or city, such as a soup kitchen or food pantry, where you and your classmates might be able to help people who need help. Plan a way to help.

• The people at the soup kitchen are helped when they get a good meal. What do you think Nana and CJ get out of working at the soup kitchen? Why do you think so?

RELATED CSK TITLES

*Bud*, Not Buddy, Christopher Paul Curtis (Delacorte)

*Each Kindness*, by Jacqueline Woodson, Illustrated by E.B. Lewis (Nancy Paulsen Books, a Division of Penguin Young Readers)

*God Bless the Child*, by Billie Holliday, Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney (Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers)
JERRY PINKNEY

Accomplished artist and illustrator Jerry Pinkney’s five decades of work offer compelling artistic insights into the legacy of African American storytelling and experience. Beyond Pinkney’s technical brilliance, his support of differentiated learning through art and of young illustrators sets him apart as both artist and educator. His powerful illustrations have redefined the scope of the sophisticated picture book and its use with multiple levels of learners.

Jerry Pinkney is the recipient of the 2010 Randolph Caldecott Medal for THE LION & THE MOUSE. His other seminal titles include John Henry (written by Julius Lester), Goin’ Someplace Special (written by Patricia McKissack), and Sweethearts of Rhythm (written by Marilyn Nelson). His next book is In Plain Sight (written by Richard Jackson).

ABOUT THE CORETTA SCOTT KING-VIRGINIA HAMILTON AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

The Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement is named in memory of beloved children’s author Virginia Hamilton. The annual award is presented in even years to an African American author, illustrator or author/illustrator for a body of his or her published books for children and/or young adults, and who has made a significant and lasting literary contribution. In odd years, the award is presented to a practitioner for substantial youth engagement using award winning African American literature.

VIRGINIA HAMILTON was an award-winning author of children’s books. She wrote more than thirty-five books throughout her career, including M. C. Higgins, the Great, for which she won the 1975 Newbery Medal. During her lifetime, Hamilton received numerous awards, including the Coretta Scott King Book Award, the Edgar Allan Poe Award, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, and the Hans Christian Andersen Award.
The Coretta Scott King Book Awards seal was designed by artist Lev Mills in 1974. The symbolism in the seal reflects both Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s philosophy and the ideals of the award. The basic circle represents continuity in movement, resolving from one idea to another. Within the circle is the image of an African American child reading a book. The five main religious symbols below the image of the child represent nonsectarianism. The superimposed pyramid symbolizes both strength and Atlanta University, the award’s headquarters when the seal was designed. At the apex of the pyramid is the dove, symbolic of peace. The rays shine toward peace and brotherhood.

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