



The City Classroom

Black Curriculum Learning Resources

Curated by Carol Leeming MBE FRSA

Representing the Global Majority

Within this Resource List, the term 'Black' is referring to Global Majority artists whose identities have been politicised as 'not white'. This includes artists who are African, Central and South American, Afro-Caribbean, South and Far-East Asian, Middle Eastern, Oceanic, and Pacific Islanders.

The aim of this resource collection is to encourage and support educational institutions to champion the Black British artists who represent our society, to raise the profile of the culture, history and ground-breaking vision contained within Black British arts, and to contribute to efforts to decolonise education.

Introduction

“Warm greetings. My name is Carol Leeming, MBE, and I have been asked to curate some learning resources in terms of the Black curriculum for teachers and arts practitioners here in Leicester. My aim is to really begin to address and champion Black British arts and culture so that we can all enjoy learning new things. I've certainly enjoyed putting this together.

You only have to walk around Leicester to see that we are a very, very culturally and ethnically diverse city, but often our arts and our education resources don't actually reflect that. I think it's going to be great for you to explore these books, the music, and the visual art images; for them to begin to act as a catalyst for your own learning and exploration but also for those children and young people that you work with. They're very rich, there's a lot of things to talk about - but there's just the joy of experiencing the music, the visual images and the books. One of the ways I think they can be used is to really get children and young people to experience and talk about how they perceive and how they receive the images and music, or how they actually respond to stories and characters in some of the books.

I do hope you enjoy these learning resources, and it really is an initial step that is trying to address a gap that has been there, really, for decades. So just go easy, go step by step, and most importantly - enjoy the process. Thank you.”

Black British Visual Arts

Notes on Viewing

All of these pieces have been intricately constructed, and some of the original works are quite large. To make the most of experiencing this work, make sure your screen is bright and have some fun zooming in on all the interesting details.

We have indicated suggested ages for these materials, but they can be adapted to suit any age range.

0 – 8 Years



Sonia Boyce (1984)

Big Women's Talk Pastel and ink on paper

Sonia Boyce, OBE RA, is a British Afro-Caribbean artist who gained prominence during the Black Cultural Renaissance of the 1980s. Boyce was awarded the prestigious Golden Lion prize at the Venice Biennale 2022 for the work *Feeling Her Way*. Her work frequently addresses Black representation, hope, pervasive racism, and the experience of being Black in a white society through paint, pastels, collage, and caricature.

Thinking points: Expressions, texture, patterns, colour, family

Learn more: [Who is Sonia Boyce? | Tate Kids](#)



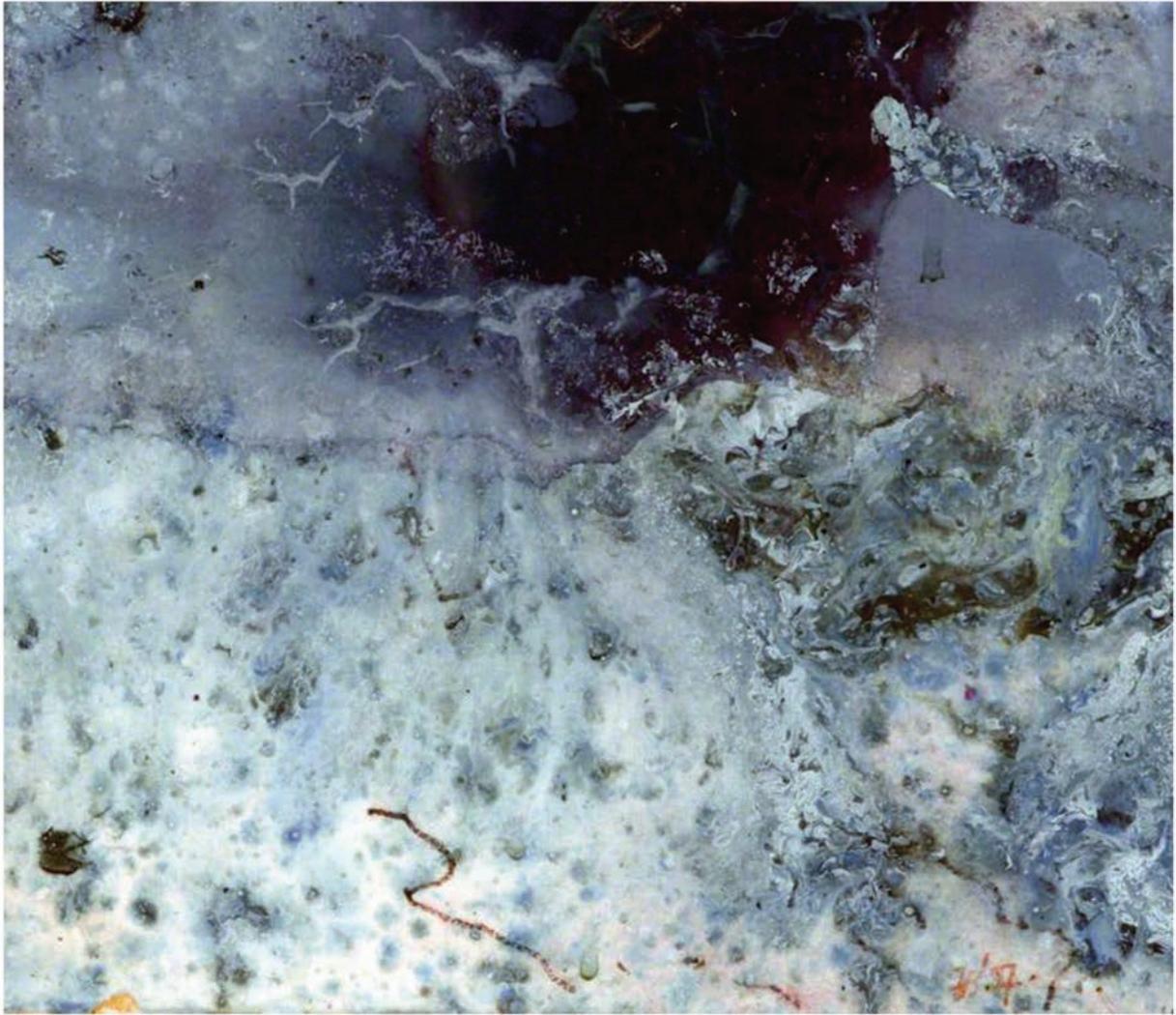
Joy Labinjo (2020)

Having the Conversation Oil on canvas

Joy Labinjo is a British-Nigerian woman, and her work explores race, identity and culture as well as joy and liveliness in Black diasporic cultures.

Thinking points: Quality of the colour, tone & highlighting on Black skin, use of space, storytelling, family, tenderness, Black figures in the everyday and lived experience, Black diasporic experience.

Learn more: Joy Labinjo



Frank Bowling Clutch

Sir Frank Bowling, OBE RA, is a pioneering painter whose energetic compositions broke new ground in the abstract art world. Bowling was the first Black artist to be elected to the Royal Academy and has continually experimented with methods and materials in his work. He worked largely within abstract expressionism and colour field painting.

Thinking points: Colour and texture. Imagination. Close up art/photography. Possible locations, elements, feelings that come up? What is it?

Learn more: [Who is Frank Bowling? | Tate Kids](#)



Anwar Jalal Shemza (1967)
Blue Blue Jazz

Anwar Shemza was a Pakistani artist, writer, and printmaker. He was influenced by Modernism and Islamic traditional arts and is regarded as a central figure of postcolonial modernist art. He explored shape and form, and many of his works were built from the layering of squares and circles.

Thinking points: Significance of the colour indigo – a historically highly valued dye across the south of Asia and the African continent in the textile industry. Patterns and tessellation, sense of rhythm. Repetition. Arabic calligraphy. Recreating patterns - potato printing.

Learn more: [Anwar Jalal Shemza - Overview | Hales Gallery](#)

8 – 12 Years



Ada M. Patterson (2019)

Looking for 'Looking for Langston' Still from a video

[project viewable here](#)

Ada M. Patterson is a Barbadian visual artist and writer who explores masquerade, fear and desire, ways of seeing, and sense of self. This piece references the poet Langston Hughes, and filmmaker Isaac Julien's film 'Looking for Langston', which is about Hughes and fellow Black artists of the Harlem Renaissance.

Thinking points: Queer narratives & gender identity, Caribbean heritage, and queer Black intersectionality. Black Atlantic imagery, culture, and religions. Feminine imagery and evocation of the classical woman with cornucopia.

Learn more: Ada M. Patterson – Framer Framed



Joy Labinjo (2021)

Terrible Isn't It Oil and pastel on canvas

Joy Labinjo is a British-Nigerian woman, and her work explores race, identity and culture as well as joy and liveliness in Black diasporic cultures.

Thinking points: Domestic settings and experiences, political relevance, current & recent events with the expanding presence of BLM activism. Texture, colour and contrast. Different perspectives.

Learn more: [Joy Labinjo](#)



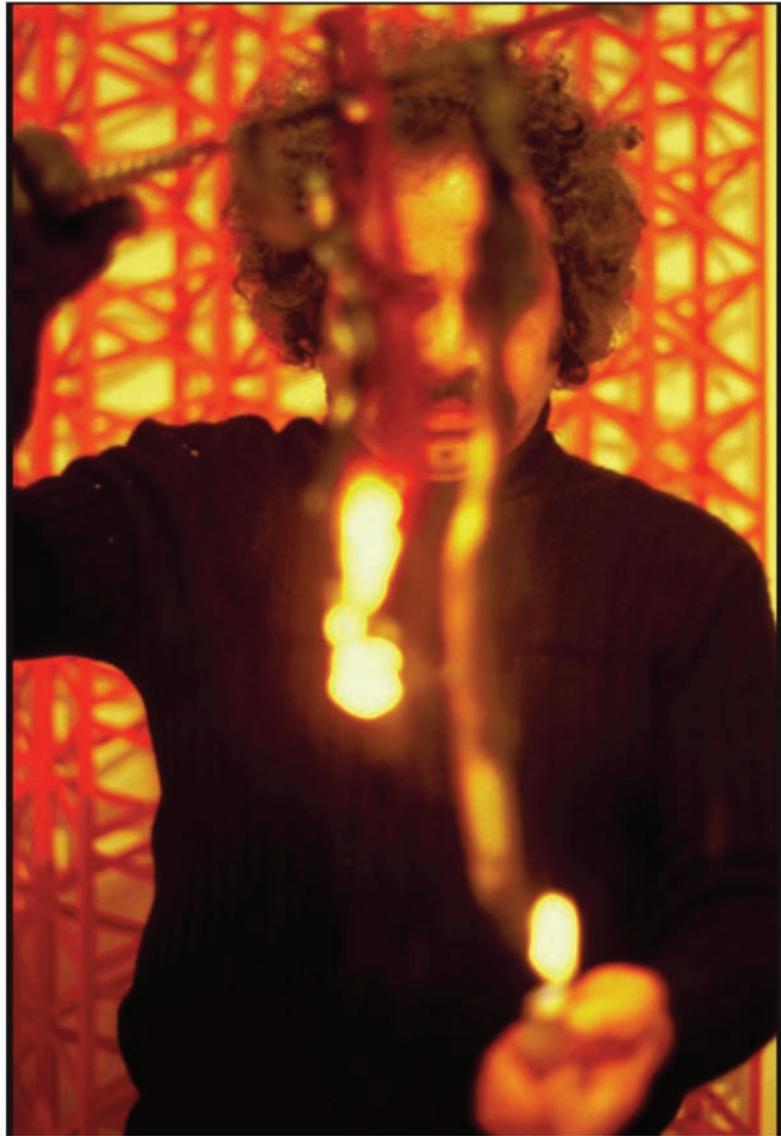
Claudette Johnson (1983)

Woman in Black Watercolour, gouache, and pastel on paper

Claudette Johnson is a British visual artist known for her large-scale paintings of Black women. Her intimate portraiture shows strong character and presence and she has been described as 'One of the most accomplished figurate artists working in Britain today' by Modern Art Oxford. She is also known for her association with BLK Art Group.

Thinking points: Thinking points: Black feminism and Black arts movements of the 80s, oppositions to the traditionally white male gaze in portraiture. Identity, self-love and beauty, as located within Black feminism. Female and specifically Black female representations in art. Invisibility and objectification.

Learn more: Claudette Johnson – Hollybush Gardens



Rasheed Araeen (1976-1979)

Burning Ties Part of a photography series documenting a live performance of this piece

Rasheed Araeen is a Pakistani London-based conceptual artist, sculptor, writer and activist who has been regarded as a leading light in Black conceptual arts. Araeen was important in establishing Black voices and presence in British arts through his work and writings and is a critic of British imperialism.

Thinking points: What do fire and burning evoke? What does a necktie represent? What makes this performance political? Symbology, ritual rebirth. Are there different effects from live performance and recorded/photographed performance?

Learn more: [Rasheed Araeen - Overview | Grosvenor Gallery](#)

Black British Music Artists

Notes on Viewing

This music collection features a diverse range of genres, including Classical, Jazz, Spoken Word, Hip Hop and more.

We have indicated suggested ages for these materials, but they can be adapted to suit any age range.

0 – 12 Years



Sacred Mountain

Incidents in the life of Nanny the Maroon by Shirley Thompson

This is part of an opera series about Nanny - Jamaican National Hero and leader of the Maroons. The Maroons were a group of Jamaicans who fled their oppressive circumstances under slavery to form their own communities. The Maroons helped to free enslaved African people from plantations for over 150 years.



Mighty River by Errollyn Wallen

This classical composition is informed by Black spirituals and explores themes of slavery and freedom.

This piece is inspired by the poetry of Langston Hughes, an icon of the Harlem Renaissance and a renowned voice of the Black Intelligentsia. He was a social activist, poet, playwright, novelist, and innovator of jazz poetry, who portrayed Black life in America from the 20s through the 60s.



Elegy: In Memoriam of Stephen Lawrence by Phillip Herbert & Chineke! Orchestra

Chineke! is the UK's first professional classical orchestra made up entirely of global majority musicians. Leicestershire-based composer Phillip Herbert is currently working on a commission from Serendipity UK to celebrate with Windrush generation. National Stephen Lawrence day is observed on April 22, and his life and story are memorialised in the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre.

5 – 12 Years



Colonial Mentality by Kokoroko

Kokoroko is an eight-piece all Black female musical group, who play a fusion of Nu Jazz and Afrobeat. They are inspired by Fela Kuti, political activist, and pioneer of the Afrobeat genre. Fela Kuti was an outspoken political critic and commentator on colonialism, postcolonialism and government in Nigeria.



LOCAL ARTS

One from Marcus Joseph by Marcus Joseph

Marcus Joseph is a Leicester based classically trained musician with an international profile of work. His Afro-centric musical influences include nu jazz, rap, reggae and reflect a positive and affirming experience of Black-British male identity.



Inner City Life – Goldie featuring Diane Charlemagne

Inner City Life was a seminal album from the Windrush era and has had a lasting impact on music. Jamaican reggae artists of the Windrush era have richly informed the development of modern genres such as Drum & Bass, Grime, Ska, Hip Hop and Drill.



Phenomenal Woman by Laura Mvula

Laura Mvula is a singer-songwriter with varied Afro-centric musical influences. This title references the poem of the same name by Maya Angelou. This music video is bright, colourful, energetic, and joyful. It was filmed in Cape Town, South Africa reflecting a growing trend of filming on locations in Africa.



By Any Means Necessary by Jorja Smith

Jorja Smith is a British singer-songwriter with Jamaican heritage. This title is a quote from Malcolm X – a very influential and significant human rights activist during the Civil Rights Movement who was a contemporary of Martin Luther King Jr. Malcolm X advocated for ‘Self Defence is No Offense’ which can be viewed as a predecessor to the Black Lives Matter movement.

8 – 12 Years



The Power of Black (Black History) by Suli Breaks

Suli Breaks is a spoken word poet who is making poetry more accessible to a new generation through his honest and relatable approach. He addresses children and young people through his work. This piece talks about racism and experiences within Black identity.



Why I Hate School but Love Education (Spoken Word) by Suli Breaks

Suli Breaks is a spoken word poet who is making poetry more accessible to a new generation through his honest and relatable approach. This video about schools, learning and the education system went viral.

Reading List

Books: 0 – 5 years

Books for Topics – Black Lives Collection

Healthline – Best Children’s Books with Black Characters

‘My First Heroes: Black History!’ Campbell Books. Illustrated by Jayri Gómez

‘We’re Going to Find the Monster’ by Malorie Blackman. Illustrated by Dapo Adeola

‘Fruits’ by Valerie Bloom & David Axtell

LOCAL ARTS

‘From Gramps, with Love: Polly, The Pugilist Penguin’

by Bobba Cass. Illustrated by Peter Buckley

LOCAL ARTS

‘From Gramps, with Love: Danny Dolphin & The Nation State’

by Bobba Cass. Illustrated by Peter Buckley

LOCAL ARTS

‘From Gramps, with Love: The Squirrel Who Lost Her Tail’

by Bobba Cass. Illustrated by Peter Buckley

Books: 4 – 6 years

‘Astro Girl’ by Ken Wilson-Max

‘Sulwe’ by Lupita Nyong’o. Illustrated by Vashti Harrison

‘Change Sings – A Children’s Anthem’ by Amanda Gorman. Illustrated by Loren Long

Diverse Reads for Primary Schools – Peters

Books: 8 – 12 years

Books with Black Characters for Kids 8-12 – Harper Collins

‘Jaz Santos vs. the World’ by Priscilla Mante

‘Becoming: Adapted for Younger Readers’ by Michelle Obama

‘Superheroes – Inspiring Stories of Secret Strength’

by Sophia Thakur. Illustrated by Denzell Dankwah

Black Lives Matter Resources, Activities and Booklists for Children & Young People –
Bradford City

Black Lives Matter Booklist – Book Trust

10 Must-Read Children’s Books by Black Authors and Illustrators – Book Trust

Articles:

Art UK – 10 Black British Artists to Celebrate

Art UK – Celebrating Black British Artists in Public Collections

Aware – The Women of the Black British Arts Movement

Sleek – The Artists Who Pioneered Black British Art

Tate Britain – Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s-Now

Time Out – Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s-Now Review

BBC News – The African Figures ‘Forgotten’ by England’s Cultural Past

Useful Links

Resources For Change - Serendipity UK

A collection of resources to support anti-racist education, with direct reference to Black British history, Black dance, arts, and culture.

Archiving the Past, Reflecting the Future – Serendipity UK

A journey through over a century of Black presence in the East Midlands that is often unrecognised, forgotten or ignored.

Learning Resources – The Black Curriculum

The Black Curriculum offer school programmes curriculum consultation, audit teacher training & assemblies on race literacy, decolonising pedagogy, language use, and more.

Schools Programme - Black Cultural Archives

Our Migration Story – Resources for Teachers

Diverse Curriculum – Hackney Education – Orlene Badu

Guardian Free Resources KS1/2/3 – 100 Great Black Britons

Why White Teachers Must Learn to Talk About Race in Schools

BAMEed Resources

BAMEed – Unpacking Racism in Early Years (Podcast)

Teachwire – Black History Month Teaching Resources for KS2 & KS3

Black Lives Matter – How Schools Must Respond

The City Classroom

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Philharmonia

