

Celebrating Black History:

From Ancient Africa to Today

Express Children’s Theatre

Grades: PK-5

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Music, dance and poetry presenting Black History from ancient Africa to today. Featuring original poetry by Houston Poet Laureates, Deborah DEEP Mouton and Emanuelee “Outspoken” Bean. From Queen Nefertiti to Duke Ellington to Ketanji Brown Jackson, this show presents the unique role African Americans play in American history. A rousing celebration for all ages and backgrounds!

TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills):

	Music	Language Arts	Social Studies	The Students Will:
K	2, 3, 4	1, 6, 8, 11	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate appropriate etiquette during live performances. • Practice listening and speaking. • Understand the contributions and challenges of African Americans in the United States. • Write/tell stories to express ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.
1	3, 5, 6	1, 6, 7, 8, 12	1, 2	
2	3, 5, 6	1, 6, 7, 8, 12	1, 2	
3	3, 5, 6	1, 6, 7, 8, 12	1, 2	
4	3, 5, 6	1, 6, 7, 8, 12	4	
5	3, 5, 6		4	

STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)

Reading Comprehension skills in Grades 3, 4, and 5
Writing skills in Grade 4

Academic Vocabulary:

African American	A black person living in America whose family originated from any of the racial groups of Africa.
Black History Month	Celebrated in February, a period to honor and celebrate the contributions, struggles, and achievements of African Americans in U.S. history and culture.
Deborah DEEP Mouton	The first Black Poet Laureate of Houston, TX; award-winning writer, director, performer and critic.
Emanuelee “Outspoken” Bean	Houston’s Poet Laureate through 2023. Commissioned to write and perform a national campaign on diversity for Pabst Blue Ribbon and VICE, while creating and producing his own festival, Plus Fest: The Everything Plus Poetry Festival.

(A small sampling of famous Africans and African Americans)

Queen Nefertiti	A queen of the 18 th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt, royal wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten. Portrayed in a famous bust of her head and numerous ancient sculptures.
Nelson Mandela	Leader in the fight against apartheid in South Africa. First Black President. Winner of Nobel Peace Prize.
Desmond Tutu	South African bishop and theologian. Human rights activist. Nobel Peace Prize winner.
Kofi Atta Annan	A diplomat from Ghana. Seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
(Edward Kennedy) "Duke" Ellington	American composer, pianist, and jazz bandleader with a career of over 50 years. He composed thousands of songs including "Take the 'A' Train" and "Mood Indigo."
<i>Ketanji Brown Jackson</i>	American lawyer and jurist; Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.
Rosa (Louise McCauley) Parks	American civil rights activist, known for her refusal to move from her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in defiance of Jim Crow laws, which sparked the Montgomery bus boycott. Known as the "mother of the civil rights movement".
W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois	American sociologist, socialist, historian, and Pan-Africanist civil rights activist.
Martin Luther King, Jr.	American Baptist minister, civil rights activist and political philosopher who was a leader of the civil rights movement from 1955 until his assassination in 1968.
Frederick Douglas	American social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer, and statesman. He was the most important leader of the movement for African American civil rights in the 19 th century.
Harriet Tubman	Escaped slave who became a conductor on the Underground Railroad, leading many others to freedom.
Maya Angelou	Poet, author, and activist known for her powerful autobiographical writings and contributions to literature and culture
Jackie Robinson	Baseball player who broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball, paving the way for other Black athletes.
(James Mercer) Langston Hughes	James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri. An early innovator of jazz poetry, Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS:

Before the performance

- What famous African Americans do you know?
- What are they known for?

After the performance:

- What did you like best about the presentation?
- Write, draw, tell, sing, dance, or act out your favorite part.

Language Arts:

- Research and then write a poem, song, rap, or story about a famous African American. Ideas:
<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=children%27s+books+by+famous+african-americans&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>
- Read books or stories by African Americans. Ideas: *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry, *I Am Enough* by Grace Byers, *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read* by Rita Lorraine Hubbard, *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson, *Off to See the Sea* by Nikki Grimes, *The Crossover* by Kwame Wilson, and *Let it Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters* by Andrea Pinkney.
- Recite or illustrate the famous “I Have a Dream” speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. or a poem by Langston Hughes.

Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream” speech excerpt:

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.
I have a dream today!

“Harlem” by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?
Or does it explode?

Math:

- Create and solve a math problem for a famous African American.
- Research a famous African American mathematician. Ideas: Benjamin Banneker, Katharine Johnson, J. Ernest Wilkins, Jr., Etta Zuber Falconer and others at <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=african+american+mathematicians&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

Social Studies:

- Recreate an African American celebration, such as Kwanzaa or Juneteenth.
- Research and write, draw, sing, or act out important events or individuals in Black History.

Science:

- Research and write, draw, sing, or act out famous African American scientists or their contributions. Ideas: George Washington Carver, Charles Drew, Daniel Hale Williams, Mae C. Jemison, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and others at <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=famous+african+american+scientists&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

Resources:**African American Authors:**

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=children%27s+books+by+famous+african-americans&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

Black History

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/black-history-month>

Kwanzaa:

https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Kwanzaa+for+kids&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&dlr=1&sei=TM9vaOWDGsy_p84Px_Td2Qo

Juneteenth

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Juneteenth+for+kids&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

For over 30 years, Express Children's Theatre has been Houston's largest multicultural theatre company dedicated exclusively to creating and performing work for children and their families in the Greater Houston area. All shows are interactive where kids can participate from their seats. This dynamic allows for great social and emotional learning where children have a voice in the experience and a stake in the outcome. In addition to performing over 200 shows a year at schools, day care centers, museums and hospitals (including 6 annual shows at Miller Outdoor Theatre) they also lead theatre arts workshops from one day to entire semesters. We are proud to have been a member of the Young Audiences roster since 2017. At Express, they don't only provide innovative entertainment, they strive to build self-esteem and promote good choices to help children become more positive participants in their families, schools and society-at-large.