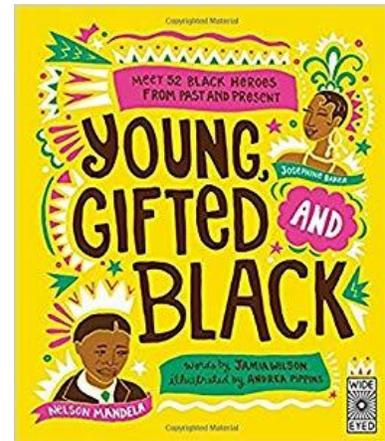


Spotlight

Wednesday, November 7th

It is incredibly important for children to see themselves reflected in the stories they read. This allows them to put themselves in the shoes of the people they read about and imagine themselves in the same place one day. Seeing illustrations and images that are diverse and inclusive ensure that all children can find stories they see themselves in. Over the last year, I have been blow away with the quality of new non-fiction for children. This is a quieter section of the library and it doesn't have the blockbuster quality of the picture books that tatter under the weight of endless re-readings or that come to define before bed storytime but I think you would be surprised if you did a wander through the kids' non-fiction at the public library. The quality of the books is just as strong as publishers get better and better at making fascinating non-fiction reads for kids.



One of my recent favourites is *Young, Gifted and Black* by Jamia Wilson and illustrated by Andrea Pippins. This bright book isn't just beautiful and interesting it is also important. Wilson and Pippins write, "We both believe in the power of creating what we need to see. The books we read and the media we consume deeply influence our understanding of who we are and what we can be – if you can't see it you can't be it." The book is filled to the brim with writers, activists, politicians, artists, athletes and adventurers. There is a president and the first African-American arctic explorer who covered almost 16,000 km on dog sleds across Greenland and Canada. The illustrations are bright and geometrical making the book a pleasure to look at and the biographies are full of interesting information that will peak the curiosity of both children and adults. Some favourites include Jean-Michel Basquait, a street artist who collaborated with Andy Warhol and died with a collection of over 1,000 unseen paintings and the incredible story of Josephine Baker who in addition to being an entertainer, a world war II spy (she hid secret messages in her sheet music), and civil rights activist also adopted 12 children after the war. As Malorie Blackman (an author featured in the book) said, "Reading is an exercise in empathy; an exercise in walking in someone else's shoes for a while." *Young, Gifted and Black* is an opportunity to walk in some extraordinary pairs of shoes.

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