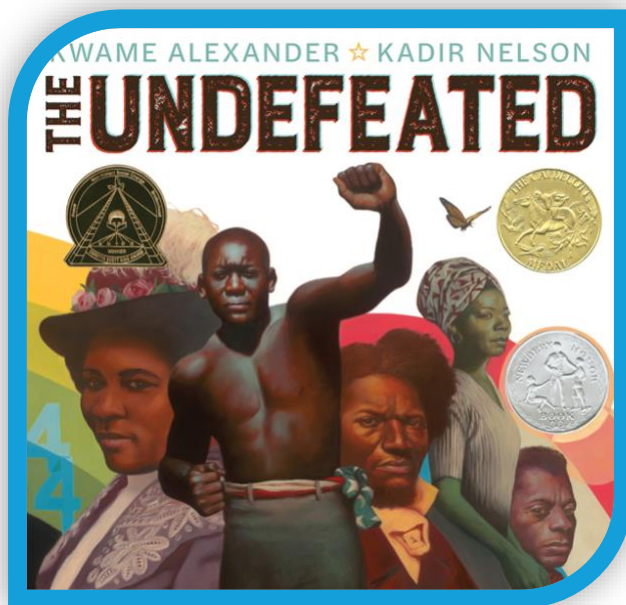




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



The Undefeated

Kwame Alexander (Author), Kadir Nelson (Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-1328780966

Publisher: Versify

Year Published: 2019

Age Range: 6–9

Book Themes

Black History, History of Racism, Civil Rights, Race, Racism, Courage and Persistence

About the Book

This poetic picture book is a love letter to Black life and people in the United States. It highlights the unspeakable trauma of slavery, the faith and fire of the civil rights movement, and the passion, and perseverance of some of the world's greatest heroes. The text is also peppered with references to the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and others, offering deeper insights into the accomplishments of the past, while bringing stark attention to the endurance and spirit of Black people surviving and thriving in the present.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their

responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What is the book about?
- How did you feel as we read the poem? What thoughts came into your mind?
- Do you recognize any of the events or people who are pictured in the book? Who are they and why do you think they are included?
- Whose stories are told in the book/poem?
- What does “undefeated” mean? What does the prefix “un” mean? Why do you think the author used so many words with the pre-fix “un?” Why do you think the book is called *The Undefeated*?
- As we read the book, what did you already know about Black history? What didn't you know? What do you want to learn more about?
- Why do you think the author wrote the book as a poem?
- What is the message of the book?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations that will make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. Black History

As Kwame Alexander notes in the back of the book, this is a book and poem about Black history. Read together the Afterword (page 36) where he writes, “I wanted to establish from the very beginning that much of what I'm talking about in this poem, so much of American history, has been forgotten, left out of the textbooks, and to truly know who we are as a country, we have to accept and embrace all of our woes and wonders.” Talk with your child about what this means, and emphasize the woes (struggles, troubles) and wonders (events, people and accomplishments to admire) that describe some of the important events, milestones, people and accomplishments in Black history. This includes slavery, the Civil War, racially motivated violence, the Civil Rights movement, and important and accomplished Black people in art, sports, politics, activism, music, literature and poetry, etc. Talk with your child about how Black history is American history, but it often doesn't get the attention it deserves in school and society. Black history is frequently minimized, excluded or inaccurately portrayed. That is one of the reasons we commemorate Black History Month in February. However, that is sometimes the only time in school and society we talk about Black history, which is problematic. Talk with your child about what they already know about Black history that is reflected in the book and what they didn't know but want to learn more about. Make a commitment to learning more as a family.

2. Social Justice and Civil Rights

Talk with your child about how the poem, and Black history in general, includes the history of social justice and civil rights in the U.S. Because Black history includes a long history of harm, bias and injustice towards the Black community, striving for social justice is an important part of the history. Define **social justice** as a set of conditions and principles that ensure every person has equitable economic, political and social rights, access and opportunities. Another way to say this (for younger children) is that “everyone deserves to be treated fairly and to be given a fair chance in life.” Together, point out the places in the book where social justice and civil rights are addressed (e.g.,

fighting against slavery, Civil Rights Movement, Black people killed by police). Talk with your child about the importance of people coming together to work for social justice, both historically and today. Share with them any examples you have of you doing that in your life and ask them about the important social justice issues today that impact the Black community (e.g., police violence and Black Lives Matter). Ask them what civil rights or social justice issues are important to them and talk together about how they might get involved in addressing that issue(s).

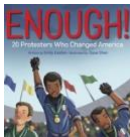
3. Poetry

Explain to your child that the book is a poem and read it together as one cohesive poem. Explain, if they don't already know, that poetry can take many forms, which can include rhyming or not, and can include alliteration (sounds in neighboring words that are repeated), repetition, rhythm, imagery, symbols and more. Go through the book together and find these elements in the poem. Ask your child what parts of the poem are especially memorable and meaningful to them and share your thoughts as well. Talk about why they think Kwame Alexander decided to write the book as a poem and do some research to learn more about his motivation to write the poem. Ask your child if they have read or written poems in school, what they like or don't like about poetry and how poetry is different than other types of creative writing. Together you can explore other poems by Kwame Alexander, other poems in general (see *Amazing Places*). You can also listen to how he reads the poem aloud (use [this link](#) and access code: UNDEFEATED or [watch a video](#) of him reading it aloud) and have them try reading it aloud or do so together by taking turns.

Other Books You May Like



28 Days by Charles R. Smith, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/28-days-moments-in-black-history-that-changed-the



Enough: 20 Protesters Who Changed American by Emily Easton, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/enough-20-protesters-who-changed-america



I Remember: Poems and Pictures of Heritage by Lee Bennett Hopkins (Compiler), www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/i-remember-poems-and-pictures-of-heritage



Sing a Song: How Lift Every Voice and Sing Inspired Generations by Kelly Starling Lyons, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/sing-a-song-how-lift-every-voice-and-sing

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on Black history, civil rights, race and racism.

Curriculum Resources

10 Ideas for Teaching Black History Month, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/10-ideas-for-teaching-black-history-month.

Civil Rights Act of 1964: 7 Ways to Commemorate the Anniversary, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/civil-rights-act-of-1964-7-ways-to-commemorate-the

Websites

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism

A list of ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These strategies can be acted upon individually, organized together as a group and young people can join with a larger effort that is taking place locally or nationally.

Black History Month

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/black-history-month

A list of lesson plans and resources to help you teach about black history in your classroom.

Civil Rights Movement

www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/civil-rights-movement

Provides historical background information, resources and pictures about the Civil Rights Movement.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about

Suggestions and strategies for having classroom conversations with young people about race and racism.

The Question Corner: Early Childhood FAQs

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children.

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources. See also "[The Purpose and Power of Protest](#)" and "[Why We Need Diverse Books](#)."

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

[People, Identity & Culture: Black, African American, Caribbean](#)

[Race & Racism](#)

[Social Justice](#)