



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month: 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 educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

The Undeclared

Kwame Alexander (Author), Kadir Nelson (Illustrator)

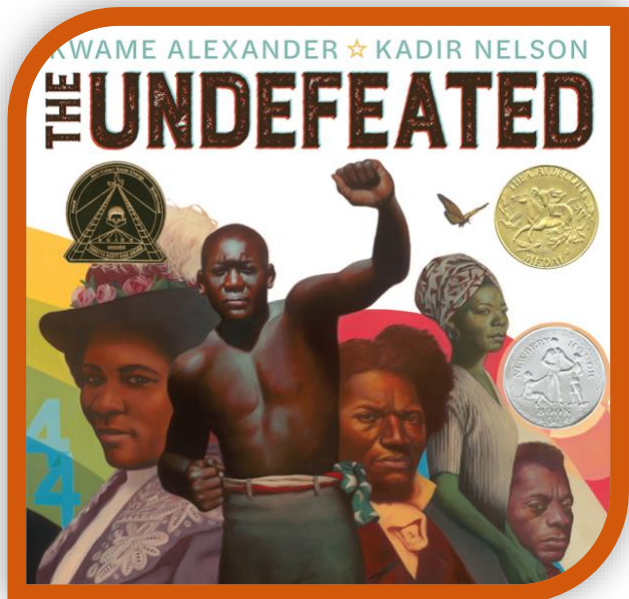
This poetic picture book is a love letter to Black life and people in the United States. It highlights the unspeakable trauma of slavery, the faith and fire of the civil rights movement, and the passion, and perseverance of some of the world's greatest heroes. The text is also peppered with references 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.

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

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and

remind children of the words' meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. For definitions that are differentiated for young children see ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> audacious | <input type="checkbox"/> sophisticated | <input type="checkbox"/> undefeated | <input type="checkbox"/> unspeakable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> faith | <input type="checkbox"/> survived | <input type="checkbox"/> undeniable | <input type="checkbox"/> unspoken |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hurdle | <input type="checkbox"/> tackle | <input type="checkbox"/> underdogs | <input type="checkbox"/> unstoppable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> imagination | <input type="checkbox"/> unafraid | <input type="checkbox"/> undiscovered | <input type="checkbox"/> untitled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> imperfect | <input type="checkbox"/> unbelievable | <input type="checkbox"/> unflappable | <input type="checkbox"/> vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> majestic | <input type="checkbox"/> unbending | <input type="checkbox"/> unforgettable | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> righteous | <input type="checkbox"/> uncertain | <input type="checkbox"/> unlimited | |

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Who do you see on the cover of the book?
- What do you think the book might be about?

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What is the book about?
- Whose stories are told in the book? How did the author tell those stories?
- As you read the book (or as it was read aloud), how did the book make you feel?
- What events in history are reflected in the book? What is the author saying about those events and people in history?
- Do you recognize any of the people who are pictured in the book? Who are they, and why do you think they author included them? Who do you want to know more about?
- What did you learn about the history of Black people's triumphs, accomplishments and achievements?
- What did you learn about the history of racism and the struggle for racial justice?
- What questions do you have? What more do you want to know?
- The author wrote this book as a poem. How is the poem similar to or different from other poems you have read?
- Why do you think the book is called *The Undefeated*? What does it mean to be undefeated?
- What parts of the book did you connect with? How do you relate to the idea of being "undefeated"?
- The book cover says, "This is a love letter to America. To Black America." How is the book/poem a love letter to Black America? What does this mean to you?
- What is the overall message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend the learning from the book.

1. Black History Research Projects

If you haven't done so already, read the "Historical Figures and Events Featured in *The Undeclared*" (on pages 37-39), which provides more information about people and events in the book. Explain that this poem/book takes the reader through various moments and events in Black history, which is integral to U.S. history. Explain that sometimes Black history and the history of racism in the U.S. doesn't get enough attention in school. This happens by covering Black history only a little, or by covering Black history inadequately, incorrectly, or only focusing on it during Black History Month. Read some of the excerpts aloud from these pages and invite students to read aloud as well. This will help students learn more about the Black people and historical events referenced in the book. Brainstorm and record a list of additional questions students have and what they want to know more about. After reading aloud the short descriptions of each in history, have students pick either a person or event from Black history cited in the book and learn more about that person, event or period of time. Students can work individually or in pairs. Have students culminate their research in a project of their choosing—either an essay, PowerPoint presentation, oral or video presentation about the person or event, or a timeline. Instead of or in addition to, students can research other important people, events and moments in Black history, including significant events that are happening today, and research those.

2. Analyzing the “Un” Words

Ask students: *Was there a pattern in the words you read in the book/poem?* Elicit from students that in the book, there are 15 words that begin with the “un” prefix, including the title *The Undeclared*. As a class, define some of the words and discuss with students why they think the author used those words in the book. Elicit that the “un” means not; for example, when we use the word “undefeated,” we are saying they are not defeated. Have students work in triads (small groups of 3) and assign each triad one of the “un” words or allow the small group to select the “un” word themselves. As a group, they should define the word (in their own words), using context clues from the book and a dictionary, if needed. Have them talk about how the “un” words relate to the words and images on that page (example: unflappable, which means to remain calm in difficult situations—the word is used to describe Jack Johnson, the first Black world heavyweight boxing champion, who faced a great deal of racism). Then, have them come up with another time, event, moment or person in history (ideally Black history) that reflects that word. They can then create a new page of the book/poem that reflects more about that word and the people or events that exemplify the word.

3. Get to Know the Author

Have students engage in a study of the author, Kwame Alexander. You can do this by first generating questions about what they want to know about him. The questions will help form their research. Have them conduct research using the following strategies, among others:

- Read the Afterword (on page 36) in the back of the book which explains how and why he wrote the book.
- Listen to interviews like [this one](#) or others online; there are many.
- Review his [webpage](#).
- Look at his social media accounts like [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).
- Learn about and read some of the [other books](#) he has written.

After conducting their research, have students write to the author and share their thoughts about the book or other books by him they read, what they've learned about him, what excites and interests them about him and his work and what questions they have about him, this book or his other books.

4. Poetry Read Aloud

As a class, listen to an audio recording of Kwame Alexander reading aloud *The Undeclared* (use [this link](#) and access code: UNDEFEATED) or [watch a video](#) of him reading it aloud. After listening together, engage students in a discussion about what they heard as he reads the book/poem aloud. Ask: *How did Kwame Alexander read the poem aloud? What did you notice? How does he use his voice? Does he change his voice in any way for emphasis (e.g., slow down, speed up, loud, quiet, etc.)?*

Elicit a few key points about reading aloud a poem which could include: how to recite from memory, understanding the language of the poem, using voice volume effectively, using punctuation to convey a rhythm, using pacing for emphasis and how to convey tone.

Then have students work on their own reading aloud of the poem by first highlighting the elements you talked about above. Students can work with a partner to give and receive constructive feedback as they work on their read aloud. This can then culminate in students each reading the poem aloud to the class or creating an audio recording of their recitation. You could also do a class read aloud of the poem by dividing the poem into parts. Students can work in pairs or groups and each pair/group takes a few pages of the book and practices reading that section aloud, using their voice, facial expressions, hand gestures and body positions to convey its meaning. Then, as a class, read the poem in order, each group reading their section without stopping. The class read aloud can be recorded (video or audio) and shared with families and the school community.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational 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

60 Years Later: The Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/60-years-later-the-legacy-of-brown-v-board-of-education

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

Experiences with Race and Racism, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/experiences-with-race-and-racism

Social Justice Poetry, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/social-justice-poetry.

Websites

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.

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.

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](#)