

Non-White Authors to Diversify Your AP Lit Curriculum

 aplitandmore.com/2020/07/19/non-white-authors-to-diversify-your-ap-lit-curriculum

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BIPOC, Latinx, Asian, Native American, and world authors are not new to the scene. They are not “trendy.” They’ve been around for ages. Unfortunately, many teachers (myself included) have not been concerned enough over their representation in the literary canon or the AP Lit curriculum in general.

For many of us, that changed this summer.

I live in St. Paul, Minnesota. The murder of George Floyd was an eye-opener to the oppression of black people for many residents in my area and around the world. This is especially true as his murderer, officer Derek Chauvin, lives just down the road from my own home. I spent this summer reading and researching racial oppression in my country, both in the past and in the present. It’s true, I am a white woman and that this may be unknown territory for me. However, I have teachers who look to me for guidance. I want to do right. I want to be helpful. This is my best attempt.

Inclusivity in AP Lit: 2nd Installment

This is the second installment in a six-part series on inclusivity in AP English Literature. I use “inclusivity” to refer to both the authors in the curriculum and the students in the classroom, but I’ll expound more on that in a later post. Week 1 focused on re-defining the meaning of “AP Worthy” when it comes to choosing books. You can read that post [here](#).

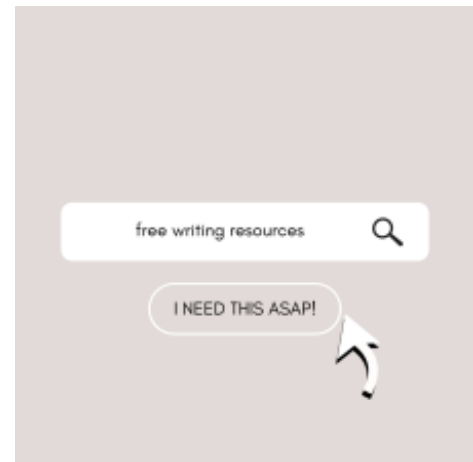
This article is simply a hub to record fiction, plays, novels, poetry, and nonfiction by authors for AP Lit who are not white. You can use this list to expand your reading list beyond white authors, both personally and for your students. Furthermore, you can use it to explore more works by some of your favorite authors.

For example, did you know Zora Neale Hurston wrote stories, poems, and nonfiction? There’s more to most authors than their 1-2 famous works!

Here are some of the best recommendations I can offer, and I will continue to update this list in the future. I’ve included Native American and indigenous authors, Latinx authors, and other authors from Asia, Africa, and around the world.

To clarify, I have not read all of these texts (can anyone?). However, they are based on the recommendations of AP English Literature teachers, titles from released AP English Lit exams or the College Board website. I’ve gathered recommendations from admirable movements and organizations, including #disrupttexts, #thebookchat, and #teachlivingpoets. I’ve also included links to any resources on my TpT site that I have available to help teach these authors if you’re interested.

Novels



[Sign up for my email list](#) and get a writing resource right away!

- Acevedo, Elizabeth – *The Poet X*
- Achebe, Chinua – *Things Fall Apart*
- Adeyemi, Tomi – *Children of Blood and Bone*
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi – *Purple Hibiscus* or *Americanah*
- Allende, Isabel – *House of Spirits*
- Almada, Selva – *The Wind That Lays Waste*
- Alvarez, Julia – *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* or *In the Time of the Butterflies*
- Anaya, Rudolfo – *Bless Me, Ultima*
- Baldwin, James – *Giovanni's Room*, *Another Country*, or *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
- Butler, Octavia – *Parable of the Sower* or *Kindred*
- Cao, Lan – *Monkey Bridge*
- Cisneros, Sandra – *The House on Mango Street*
- Chang, Jung – *Wild Swans*
- Clarke, Breena – *River, Cross My Heart*
- Cleage, Pearl – *What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day*
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi – *The Water Dancer*
- Danticat, Edwidge – *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, *The Farming of Bones*, *The Dew Breaker*
- Desai, Kiran – *The Inheritance of Loss*
- Dias, Junot – *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
- Dimaline, Cherie – *The Marrow Thieves*



Ward's *Salvage the Bones* was a game-changer for me. She's quickly becoming one of the most influential voices in fiction.

- Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee – *One Amazing Thing* (excerpt used in 2020 AP Lit exam)
- Edugyan, Esi – *Washington Black*
- Ellison, Ralph – *Invisible Man*
- Eng, Tan Twan – *The Gift of Rain* (excerpt used in 2020 AP Lit exam)
- Erdich, Leslie – *Love Medicine, Tracks, or Round House*
- Esquivel, Laura – *Like Water For Chocolate*
- Gaines, Ernest – *A Gathering of Old Men*
- Giasa, Yaa – *Homegoing*
- Haley, Alex – *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*



People didn't know that there was literature coming out of Afghanistan until Khaled Hosseini came along.

“I am increasingly convinced that AP English Literature and Composition by its very nature privileges whiteness and a white view of literature. I would argue similar problems plague most Advanced Placement classes.” – Arthur Chiaravalli

- Hami, Mohsi – *Exit West*
- Harper, Frances Ellen Watkins – *Iola Leroy* (also called *Shadows Uplifted*)
- Herrera, Yuri – *Signs Preceding the End of the World*
- Hosseini, Khaled – *The Kite Runner* or *A Thousand Splendid Suns*
- Hughes, Langston – *Not Without Laughter*
- Hurston, Zora Neale – *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

- Ishiguro, Kazuo – *The Remains of the Day* or *Never Let Me Go*
- Kim, Richard E. – *The Martyred*
- King, Thomas – *Green Grass, Running Water*
- Kingston, Maxine Hong – *The Woman Warrior*
- Kogawa, Joy – *Obasan*
- Jen, Gish – *Typical American*
- Jin, Ha – *Waiting or A Free Life: A Novel*
- Johnson, James Weldon – *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (excerpt used in 2020 AP Lit exam)
- Lahiri, Jhumpa – *The Namesake*
- Lalami, Laila – *The Other Americans* (excerpt used in 2020 AP Lit exam)
- Larsen, Nella – *Passing* or *Quicksand*
- Lee, Chang-Rae – *A Gesture Life* or *Native Speaker*
- Lee, Min Jin – *Pachinko*
- Murakami, Haruki – *Kafka on the Shore* or *Norwegian Wood*
- Marquez, Gabriel García – *100 Years of Solitude*, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, or *Chronicle of Death Foretold*
- Marshall, Paule – *Brown Girl, Brownstones* or *Praisesong for the Widow*
- Mathis, Ayana – *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie*
- McKay, Claude – *Home to Harlem*
- Momaday, N Scott – *House Made of Dawn*

Another AP Lit teacher discusses the underrepresentation of Latinx authors in [this excellent blog post](#).

- Morrison, Toni – *Beloved*, *Song of Solomon*, *Sula*, or *The Bluest Eye* (personal favorite: *Beloved*)
- Mukherjee, Bharati – *Jasmine*
- Naipaul, V. S. – *A Bend in the River*
- Naylor, Gloria – *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Mama Day* or *Linden Hills*
- Ng, Celeste – *Everything I Never Told You* or *Little Fires Everywhere*
- Ng, Fae M. – *Bone: A Novel*
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh – *The Sympathizer*
- Okada, John – *No-No Boy*
- Olivarez, José – *Citizen Illegal*
- Orange, Tommy – *There, There*
- Petry, Ann – *The Street*
- Rao, Shobha – *Girls Burn Brighter*
- Roy, Arundhati – *The God of Small Things*
- Rulfo, Juan – *Pedro Paramo*
- Rushdie, Salman – *Midnight's Children* or *Free Radio*
- Saadawi, Ahmed – *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

- Sapphire – *Push*
- Saramago, José – *Blindness*
- Selvon, Sam – *Moses Ascending*
- Silko, Leslie Marmon – *Ceremony*
- Smith, Zadie – *White Teeth*
- Syal, Meera – *Anita and Me* (excerpt used in 2020 AP Lit exam)
- Tan, Amy – *The Bonesetter's Daughter* or *The Joy Luck Club*
- Thurman, Wallace – *The Blacker the Berry*
- Villarreal, Jose Antonio – *Pocho*
- Walker, Alice – *The Color Purple*
- Ward, Jesmyn – *Sing, Unburied, Sing* or *Salvage the Bones*
- Whitehead, Colson – *The Underground Railroad* or *The Nickel Boys*
- Wideman, John Edgar – *Sent For You Yesterday*
- Wright, Richard – *Black Boy* and *Native Son*
- Yapa, Sunil – *Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of Your Fist*



Haruki Murakami's works are a unique and creative take on magical realism (which is already unique and creative on its own!).

Nonwhite Authors to Include in Your
AP Lit Curriculum



read *Beloved* when I was a new hire in 2006. It changed my life forever, and for me, it begins and ends with Toni Morrison.

Plays

- Fuller, Charles – *A Soldier's Play*
- Hansberry, Lorraine – *A Raisin in the Sun* (personal favorite)
- Jacobs-Jenkins, Branden – *Appropriate, An Octoroon, Gloria, or Everybody*
- Jones, Leroi (also known as Amiri Baraka) – *Dutchman*
- Levy, Andrea and Helen Edmundson – *Small Island*
- Milner, Ron – *Checkmates*
- Nottage, Lynn – *Sweat*
- Orta, Marisela Treviño – *Shoe*
- Parks, Suzanne-Lori – *Top Dog/Underdog*
- Shange, Ntozake – *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf*
- Smith, Anna Deavere – *Fires in the Mirror*
- Valdez, Luis – *Zoot Suit*
- Wilson, August – *Fences* or *The Piano Lesson*



What if Lorraine Hansbury hadn't died when she was 34? What accomplishments might she have achieved?

Poems

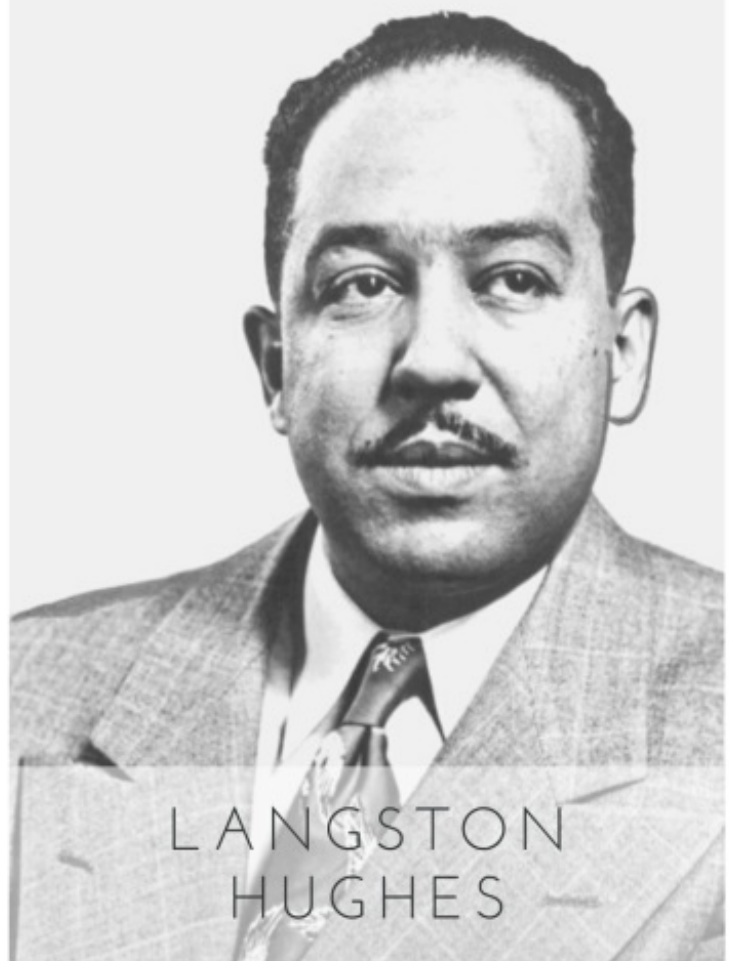
- Alexie, Sherman – “Evolution” and “On the Second Anniversary of My Father’s Death” (personal favorite: “Evolution”)
- Angelou, Maya – *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ‘fore I Diie* (collection of poems)
“Phenomenal Woman” and “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”
- Asghar, Fatimah – “If They Should Come For Us”
- Baldwin, James – “Untitled”
- Braithwaite, Edward Kamau – “Ogun”
- Brooks, Gwendolyn – “We Real Cool,” “The Bean Eaters,” “Kitchenette Building,” or “The Ballad of Rudolph Reed” (personal favorite: “We Real Cool”)
- Brown, Jericho – “Dear Dr. Frankenstein” or “Say Thank You Say I’m Sorry”
- Clifton, Lucille – “mulberry fields,” “won’t you celebrate with me,” “forgiving my father,” and “sorrows” (personal favorite: “mulberry fields”)
- Coleman, Wanda – *American Sonnets* (poetry collection)
- Cullen, Countee – “Incident”
- Diaz, Natalie – “Abecedarian Requiring Further Examination of Anglikan Seraphym Subjugation of a Wild Indian Rezervation”
- Dixon, Melvin – “Heartbeats”
- Dove, Rita – “Ars Poetica”
- Dunbar, Paul Laurence – “We Wear the Mask,” “The Paradox,” or “Douglass”
- Giovanni, Nikki – “Nikki-Rosa”
- Handal, Nathalie – “Caribe in Nueva York”
- Harjo, Joy – “How to Write a Poem in a Time of War”
- Harper, Michael S. – “American History”
- Harvey, Yona – “Hurricane”



“My Father and the Fig Tree” is a wonderful poem to introduce symbolism in poetry with your students. In fact, all of Nye’s poetry is popular and relatable with kids today.

- Hayden, Robert – “Those Winter Sundays” or “Middle Passage”
- Hayes, Terrance – “We Should Make a Documentary About Spades”
- Hughes, Langston – “Theme for English B,” “I, Too, Sing America,” “Cross,” “Harlem,” “Mother to Son,” or “Song For a Dark Girl” (Personal favorite: *all of them*)
- Johnson, James Weldon – “A Poet to His Baby Son”
- Joseph, Allison – “Thirty Lines About the ‘Fro”
- Komunyakaa, Yusef – “Facing It”
- Lee, Li-Young – “A Story” and “I Ask My Mother to Sing”
- Lorde, Audre – “Coal”

Nonwhite Authors to Include in Your
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Seriously, is there a Langston Hughes poem that isn't a game-changer? The man is an icon.

Click [here](#) to read my top 10 poems to teach in AP Lit.

- May, Jamaal – “There Are Birds Here” or “A Brief History of Hostility”
- Nelson, Marilyn – “How I Discovered Poetry” or “Bedside Reading”
- Neruda, Pablo – Any poem!
- Nezhukumatathil, Aimee – “Baked Goods”
- Nye, Naomi Shihab – “Defining White” and “My Father and the Fig Tree” (personal favorite: “My Father and the Fig Tree”)
- Olivarez, José – “I Walk Into Every Room and Yell Where the Mexicans At”
- Randall, Dudley – “Ballad of Birmingham” (personal favorite)
- Rankine, Claudia – *Citizen: An American Lyric* (book-length poem), “Coherence in Consequence” or “Weather”
- Rushdin, Kate – “The Bridge Poem” or *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*
- Sanchez, Sonia – “This is Not a Small Voice”
- Senior, Olive – “Plants”
- Shakur, Tupac – *The Rose That Grew from Concrete* (poetry collection)
- Shire, Warsan – “Backwards” or “The House”
- Smith, Clint – *Counting Descent* (poetry collection) or “The Drone”
- Spriggs, Bianca Lynn – “What Women Are Made Of”
- Trethewey, Natasha – “Incident” or “Miscegenation”
- Troupe, Quincy – “Flying Kites” or “Poem For My Father”
- Truth, Sojourner – “Ain’t I a Woman?” (personal favorite)
- Walcott, Derek – “Omeros” (epic poem) or “XIV”
- Walker, Alice – “Women”
- Walker, Margaret – “Childhood,” “For My People,” or “Lineage”
- Wheatley, Phillis – “On Being Brought from Africa to America”
- Woodson, Jacqueline – *Brown Girl Dreaming* (novel told through poetry)

Nonwhite Authors to Include in Your
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“mulberry fields” was completely riveting the first time I read it. And now I’m stopped in my tracks by every Lucille Clifton poem.

Nonwhite Authors to Include in Your
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I was first introduced to Li-Young Lee when I scored for the 2011 exam and his poem “A Story” was the prompt. Since then, I’ve been more and more impressed with his subtle but powerful imagery.

Short Stories/Short Fiction

- Achebe, Chinua – “Dead Men’s Path”
- Alvar, Mia – “The Miracle Worker”
- Alvarez, Julia – “Antojos”
- Angelou, Maya – “Steady Going Up”
- Baldwin, James – “Sonny’s Blues” or “Exodus”
- Bambara, Toni Cade – “Talkin bout Sonny,” “Maggie” or “The Organizer’s Wife”
- Bennet Jr., Lerone – “The Convert”
- Boehm, Lucille – “Condemned House”
- Bontemps, Arna – “A Summer Tragedy”
- Brown, Frank London – “A Matter of Time”
- Brown, Sterling – “And/Or”
- Butler, Emma E. – “Polly’s Hack Ride”
- Butler, Octavia – “Bloodchild”
- Dorsey, Gertrude H. – “An Equation”
- Du Bois, W. E. B. – “The Comet,” “Jesus Christ in Texas” or “On Being Crazy”
- Chestnutt, Charles W. – “The Passing of Grandison,” “Uncle Wellington’s Wives” or “The Gophered Grapevine”



Read “Eleven.” Read Mango Street. Read “My Name.”
Read all Cisneros, now.

- Cisneros, Sandra – “Eleven,” “My Name,” or *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (collection of short stories) (personal favorite – “Eleven”)
- Clarke, Breena – “The Drill”
- Clarke, John Henrik – “The Boy Who Painted Christ Black”
- Collier, Eugenia W. – “Marigolds”
- Danticat, Edwidge – “New York Day Women”
- Davis, Arthur P. – “How John Boscoe Outsung the Devil”
- Davis, John P. – “The Overcoat”
- Due, Tananarive – *Ghost Summer* (collection of short stories)
- Dunbar, Paul Laurence – “The Scapegoat” or “The Lynching of Jube Benson”
- Ellison, Ralph – “Afternoon”
- Erdich, Louise – “Red Convertible”
- Evans, Danielle Valore – *Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self* (collection of short stories)
- Fajardo-Anstine, Kali – “Sugar Babies” or “Remedies”
- Fauset, Jessie – “Mary Elizabeth”
- Fisher, Rudolph – “The City of Refuge”
- Fuller, Hoyt W. – “The Senegalese”
- Gains, Ernest J. – “The Sky is Gray”
- Hairston, Loyle – “The Winds of Change”
- Hamer, Martin J. – “Sarah”
- Himes, Chester – “Mama’s Missionary Money”
- Hughes, Langston – “Feet Live Their Own Life” or “One Friday Morning”



Jhumpa Lahiri’s short stories are a big hit with many students. They’re easy to relate with but also complex and great for written analysis.

Did you know? Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was the first black woman to publish a short story back in 1859.

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- Hurston, Zora Neale – “Muttsy” or “The Gilded Six-Bits”
 - Jones, LeRoi – “The Screamers”

- Jordan, Jennifer – “The Wife”
- Kelley, William Melvin – “Cry For Me”
- Killens, John O. – “God Bless America”
- Kincaid, Jamaica – “Girl” (personal favorite)
- la Guma, Alex – “The Lemon Orchard”
- Lahiri, Jhumpa – *The Interpreter of Maladies* (collection of short stories)
- LaValle, Victor – “The Ballad of Black Tom” or *Slapboxing with Jesus* (collection of short stories)
- Lowe, Ramona – “The Woman in the Window”
- Marquez, Gabriel Garcia – “A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings”, “One of These Days,” or “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World”
- Marshall, Paule – “Reena”
- McBride, James – *Five Carat Soul* (collection of short stories)
- McCay, Claude – “He Also Loved” or “Truant”
- McPherson, James Alan – “On Trains”
- Moore, Alice Ruth (also called Alice Dunbar Nelson) – “A Carnival Jangle”
- Morrison, Toni – “Recitatif”
- Murakami, Haruki – “Samsa in Love”
- Murray, Albert – “Train Whistle Guitar”
- Nettel, Guadalupe – *Bezoar* (collection of short stories)
- Nichols, Laura D. – “Prodigal”
- Offord, Carl Ruthven – “So Peaceful in the Country”
- Orozco, Daniel – “Orientation”
- Packer, ZZ – “Speaking in Tongues”
- Penso, Kia – “The Gift”
- Petry, Ann – “The Bones of Louella Brown” or “Solo on the Drums”
- Ries, Adeline F. – “Mamma: A Story”
- Robotham, Rosemarie – “Jesse”
- Schweblin, Samantha – *Fever Dream* or *Mouthful of Birds* (short story collections)
- Senna, Danzy – “The Care of the Self”
- Shawl, Nisi – “Black Betty” or “The Water Museum”
- Smith, John Caswell – “Fighter”
- Suarez, Virgil – “A Perfect Hotspot”
- Tellez, Hernando – “Lather and Nothing Else”
- Tervalon, Jervey – “Picture This”
- Toomer, Jean – “Becky”
- Vroman, Mary Elizabeth – “See How They Run”
- Walker, Alice – “Flowers,” “Elethia,” or “Everyday Use” (personal favorite – “Everyday Use”)
- Wang, Xuan Juliana – *Home Remedies* (collection of short stories)
- West, Dorothy – “The Typewriter” or “Mammy”

- Wright, Richard – “Uncle Tom’s Children” or “Bright and Morning Star”
- Yerby, Frank – “The Homecoming”
- Yu, Charles – *Sorry Please Thank You* (collection of short stories)

Memoirs

- Angelou, Maya – *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
- Ashe, Arthur – *Days of Grace*
- Eire, Carlos – *Waiting for Snow in Havana*
- Fisher, Antwone – *Finding Fish: A Memoir*
- Hurston, Zora Neale – *Dust Tracks on a Road*
- Laymon, Kiese – *Heavy: An American Memoir*
- Mathabane, Mark – *Kaffir Boy*
- Mchado, Carmen Maria – *In the Dream House*
- Noah, Trevor – *Born a Crime* (personal favorite)
- Satrapi, Marjane – *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*
- Ung, Luong – *First They Killed My Father*
- Wideman, John Edgar – *Brothers and Keepers*
- Yang, Kao Kalia – *The Latecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*
- *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot* (this author is white, but the subject and discussion on oppression and disregard for the Lacks family and black Americans in general makes it worthy of inclusion)



Born a Crime is a wonderful memoir for students down to 9th grade. It presents Noah’s struggle living under apartheid with humor and heart.

Nonfiction

- Aditchie, Chimamanda Ngozi – *We Should All Be Feminists*
- Baldwin, James – *The Fire Next Time*, “Notes of a Native Son,” or “Nobody Knows My Name” (essays)
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi – *Between the World and Me*
- Du Bois, W. E. B. – *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, *The Souls of Black Folk*, or *The Emerging Thought of W. E. B. Du Bois: Essays and Editorials from “The Crisis”*
- Edim, Glory (editor) – *Well-Read Black Girl* (collection of essays)
- Ellison, Ralph – *Shadow and Act*
- Haley, Alex – *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
- Hughes, Langston – “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”
- Hurston, Zora Neale – “I Love Myself When I am Laughing and Then Again When I am Looking Mean and Impressive”
- Kendi, Ibram X. – *How to Be an AntiRacist or Stamped From the Beginning*
- Joseph, Peniel E. – *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*
- Lorde, Audre – *Sister Outsider*
- Luiselli, Valeria – *Tell Me How it Ends* or *Sidewalks*
- Morrison, Toni – *Playing in the Dark* or *What Moves at the Margin*
- Naipaul, V. S. – *Middle Passage*
- Reynolds, Jason and Ibram X. Kendi – *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You: A Remix of the National Book Award-winning Stamped from the Beginning*



Ibram X. Kendi is rapidly becoming one of my favorite authors. His books and essays are instructive and riveting, and his social media presence is a pleasant mix of humility and passion. I accessed his recommendations on his website as well to supplement this nonfiction list.

- Roberts, Dorothy – *Fatal Invention*
- Stevenson, Bryan – *Just Mercy*
- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahтта (editor) – *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*
- Walker, Alice – “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston”

Misc.

- Aditchie, Chimamanda Ngozi – “The Danger of a Single Story” (TED Talk)
- Collins, Kathleen – *The Cruz Brothers and Miss Malloy* and *Losing Ground* (film narratives)
- DuVernay, Ava – *13th* (film)
- Glover, Donald (aka Childish Gambino) – “This is America” (music video)
- Haley, Alex – *Roots* (television miniseries)
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole – *The 1619 Project* (interactive website by *The New York Times*)
- Hurston, Zora Neale – *Barracoon* – (collection of interview questions)
- King, Martin Luther – “I Have a Dream” speech
- Peck, Raoul – *I am Not Your Negro* (James Baldwin documentary)
- Smith, Clint – “How to Raise a Black Son in America” (TED Talk)



I know this one seems obvious, but have you considered pairing it with a contemporary text or poem?

This list took me a full week to compile but I’m sure I missed some great additions. Please comment below or [email me](#) with suggestions of other authors for AP Lit and I’ll add them to the list!

Advertisements



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I am a full time high school English teacher and Writing Center coordinator at a K-12 school in Minnesota. I specialize in forming creative lesson plans, engaging students in real-world, meaningful lessons, and creating meaningful and effective assessments rather than busywork. I also have a Teachers Pay Teachers store, where I specialize in literature and writing resources. [View all posts by aplitandmore](#)