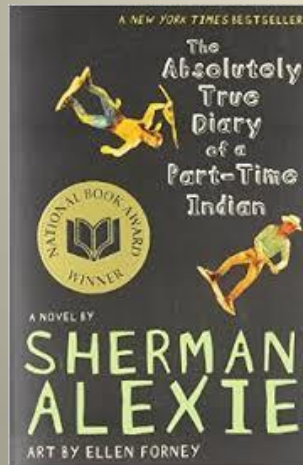
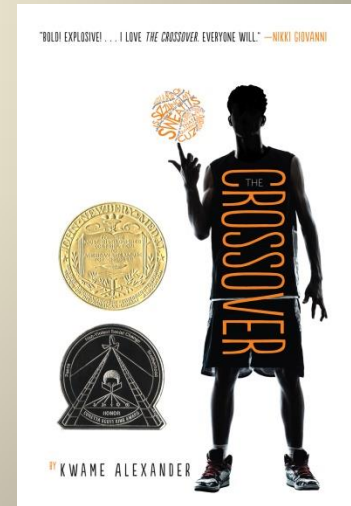


# Hot Topic: Racism



Kate Hartig  
Fall 2016



# Definition

**Racism is a belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race and that these can be used to distinguish one as inferior or superior to another race.**

(Oxford. (2016). Racism. *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*. Retrieved at <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/racism>)

**“Racism is not merely a simplistic hatred. It is, more often, broad sympathy toward some and broader skepticism toward others...”**

Coates, T.-N. (2012, September). Fear of a black president. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/09/fear-of-a-black-president/309064/>



**Black people in the United States have “historically found themselves – a part of and yet apart from American society.”** Sims Bishop, R. (2012) referred to in Panlay, S. (2016). *Racism in contemporary African American children’s and young adult literature*. [New York, N.Y.]: Palgrave Macmillan.



- What can we do to increase awareness of the problem within ourselves, our school and the community?

- What can we do to increase awareness of the problem within ourselves, our school and the community?
- How can we develop a collection that increases materials for a diverse population?

- What can we do to increase awareness of the problem within ourselves, our school and the community?
- How can we develop a collection that increases materials for a diverse population?
- Why is it important that materials for a diverse population are acquired and made available, even actively marketed? Even if our school population is not so diverse?

- What can we do to increase awareness of the problem within ourselves, our school and the community?
- How can we develop a collection that increases materials for a diverse population?
- Why is important that materials for a diverse population are acquired and made available, even actively marketed? Even if our school population is not so diverse?
- And where can we find guidance to develop the collection?

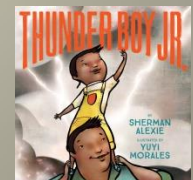
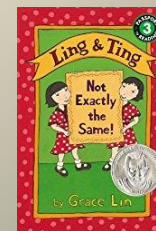
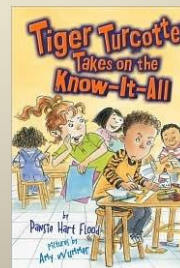
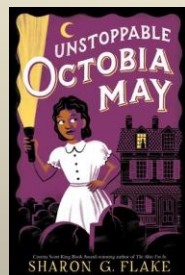
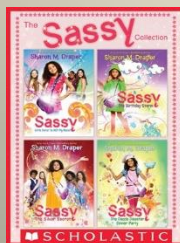
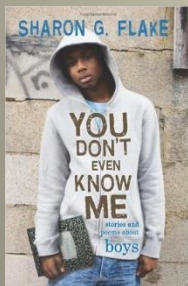


## Introduction

As library media specialists we need to be aware that racism affects the lives of our students in nuanced and more obvious experiences.

The implications should be a sensitivity for the importance of a diverse collection and a response to the challenge which calls for decisions on the collection. There may be barriers to developing the collection, but awareness of the value of a multicultural collection should provide incentive to do so.

Developing a diverse collection which provides students with windows and mirrors to the lives they seek or need to understand is imperative as the library media specialist builds a collection for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner and citizen of the world.



As library media specialists we need to be aware that racism affects the lives of our students.

We must always seek to increase our awareness of its presence.

Quick study:

Read the newspaper.

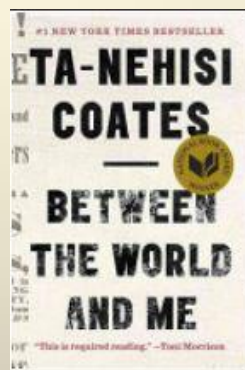
Keep current with ALA viewpoints.

Read books by diverse authors and books from the banned book lists. See the ALA's list of Frequently challenged books. Like: Sherman Alexie's book, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, 2009.

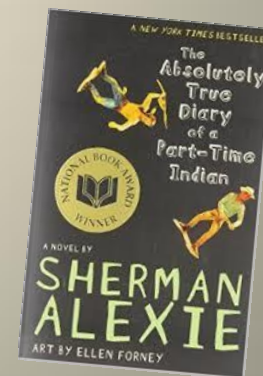
Read or listen to Ta-Nehisi Coates's book, *Between the world and me*, 2016.



Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.



Being Black in Baltimore and in the United States

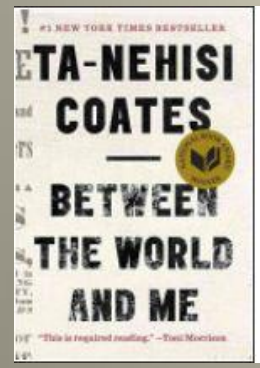
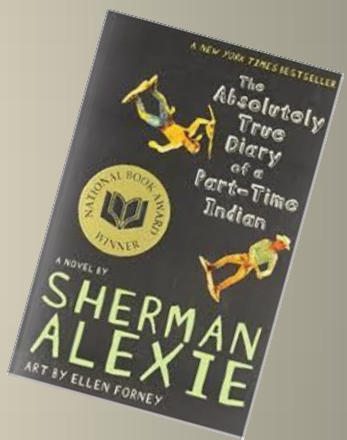


Being Native American in a white world



The ALA speaks to the violence, racism and loss of Cynthia G. Hurd, manager of the St. Andrews Regional Library Branch in the Charleston county public library system who was lost that day.

Alexie Sherman describes the lives of his family, friends, and members of the community when isolated and confronted with ongoing poverty on a reservation in Spokane, Washington.



Ta-Nehisi Coates speaks about the failure of the Baltimore school system for him and the dim view he and his community took of the police who could not protect black children on their way to and from school but ultimately provoked and and harmed "the black body."

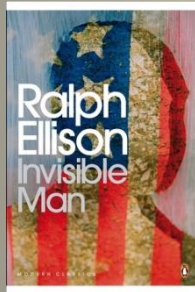
Recall books that you may have read racism.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. First published in 1952.

Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. First published in 1961.

James Baldwin's *No Name in the Street*. First published 1972.

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. First published 1970.

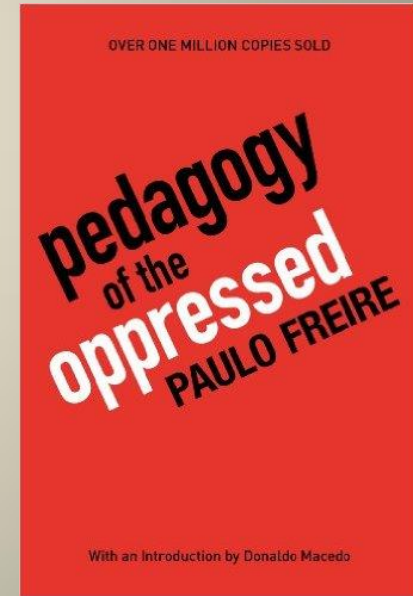
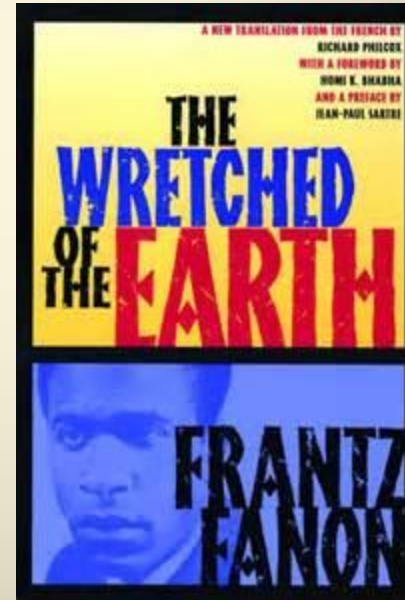
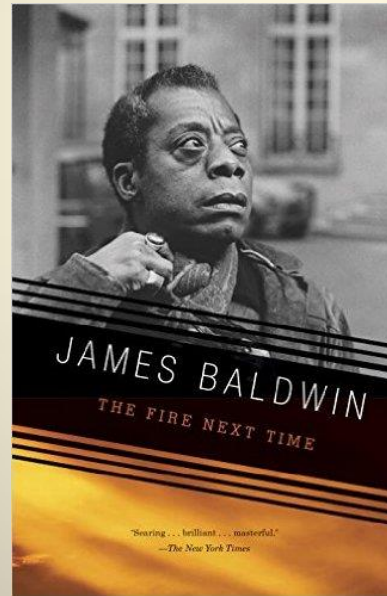


Ralph Ellison  
INVISIBLE MAN

Prologue

I am an invisible man.

No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.



Take a look at the school library shelves.



# Diversity in Children's Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds  
Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's  
Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
[ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pstats.asp](http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pstats.asp)



**0.9%**  
American  
Indians/  
First Nations

**2.4%**  
Latinx

**3.3%**  
Asian Pacifics/  
Asian Pacific  
Americans

**7.6%**  
African/  
African  
Americans

**12.5%\***  
Animals, Trucks, etc.

**73.3%\*\***  
White

Illustration by David Huxley, in consultation with Sarah Park Dahlan & Molly Beth Griffin  
Revised under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

\* About a quarter of the total children's books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.

\*\* The remainder depict white characters.

Infographic describes [statistics](#) of the Cooperative Children's Book center (School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison) about children's picture books that were published in 2015

# Diversity in Children's Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds. Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. [ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp](http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp)



**0.9%**  
American  
Indians/  
First Nations

**2.4%**  
Latinx

**3.3%**  
Asian Pacifics/  
Asian Pacific  
Americans

**7.6%**  
African/  
African  
Americans

**12.5%\***  
Animals, Trucks, etc.

**73.3%\*\***  
White

Illustration by David Huyck, in consultation with Sarah Park Dahlen & Molly Beth Griffin. Released under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

\* About a quarter of the total children's books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.

\*\* The remainder depict white characters.

The Cooperative Children's book center examined children's trade books since 2002 to see how many were written by authors of color or featured strong characters that were African American, Indian/first nation, Asian/Pacific or Latino. In 2015 out of 3,400 books received only 107 were written by African American authors, and only 270 had African American characters who played a strong role or were the protagonist in the story.

## Implications

How can the library media specialist develop the collection to better serve the needs of students.

Aim to develop a collection which includes stories about

- the population inside the school,
- the community surrounding its walls,
- and the larger community



Learn about the students and about the community.  
 There are plenty of places online with data you could use:

**DATA**  
**BRIEF**

**Table 1. Average Percentage Point Change in the Racial Composition of Schools by District, 1990-2010**

| District           | White        | Black      | Latino     | Asian      |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Charles            | -40.6        | 29.5       | 4.3        | 1.7        |
| Howard             | -30.6        | 6.6        | 7.2        | 10.3       |
| Montgomery         | -26.9        | 4.1        | 16.3       | 2.3        |
| Baltimore          | -26.4        | 16.5       | 4.6        | 2.5        |
| Frederick          | -24.3        | 5.0        | 10.1       | 3.5        |
| Prince George's    | -22.1        | 3.6        | 17.4       | -1.2       |
| Anne Arundel       | -20.3        | 5.7        | 7.9        | 1.7        |
| Washington         | -19.4        | 7.2        | 5.3        | 0.9        |
| Harford            | -16.8        | 6.9        | 3.8        | 1.4        |
| Wicomico           | -15.8        | 2.9        | 5.7        | 1.7        |
| Cecil              | -12.7        | 3.7        | 3.9        | 0.4        |
| Baltimore City     | -10.3        | 5.8        | 3.6        | 0.5        |
| Caroline           | -9.6         | -3.2       | 7.8        | 0.2        |
| St. Mary's         | -9.6         | 2.1        | 3.5        | 1.4        |
| Dorchester         | -8.1         | -2.0       | 4.6        | 0.6        |
| Carroll            | -7.6         | 1.6        | 2.9        | 1.2        |
| Allegany           | -5.7         | 1.6        | 1.1        | 0.2        |
| Calvert            | -5.7         | -3.7       | 3.6        | 1.1        |
| Talbot             | -4.9         | -8.4       | 8.2        | 1.1        |
| Kent               | -4.3         | -4.0       | 3.7        | -0.4       |
| Garrett            | -1.4         | 0.2        | 0.4        | 0.3        |
| Queen Anne's       | 0.7          | -7.8       | 3.3        | 0.9        |
| Somerset           | 1.0          | -13.2      | 6.1        | 0.6        |
| Worcester          | 2.3          | -11.1      | 4.3        | 0.8        |
| <b>State Total</b> | <b>-17.4</b> | <b>2.5</b> | <b>9.1</b> | <b>2.2</b> |

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Common Core of Data*.

University of Maryland Maryland Equity Project. (2015, February). Trends in Maryland public school enrollment: Racial composition , Data Brief. Retrieved from [http://www.education.umd.edu/Academics/Departments/TLPL/centers/MEP/Research/k12Education/MEPRacialCompBrief\\_2.25.15.pdf](http://www.education.umd.edu/Academics/Departments/TLPL/centers/MEP/Research/k12Education/MEPRacialCompBrief_2.25.15.pdf)

Reduce the barriers that exist to enrich the library collection:

- budget constraints,
- controversial material considerations,
- time constraints
- concern about circulation

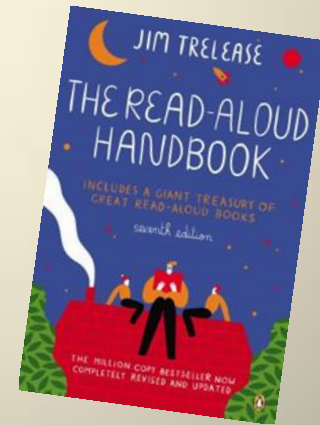
Overcome, reduce, or eliminate those barriers:

- Budget: Pitch the importance of diverse materials to the administration, use a site like donorschoose.org to fundraise, and use the public library.



Reduce those barriers:

- Controversial elements: Read aloud a portion of the book or plan a book study to encourage conversations.



Overcome those barriers:

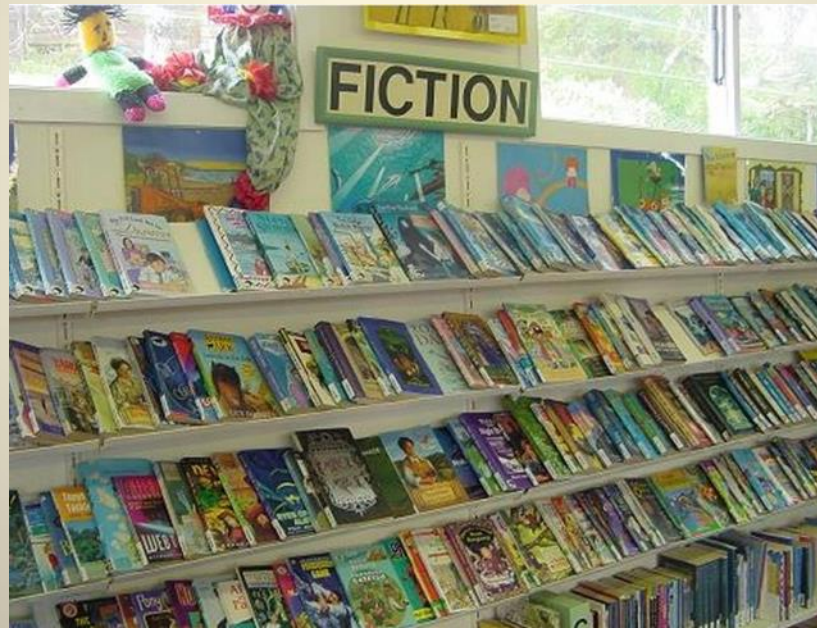
Time constraints:

- Check out Hyperion/Disney imprints from [Jump at the Sun](#) publications offer books with strong characters who are African American.
- Continue an ongoing quest for materials by subscribing to the *Horn Book* magazine and *School Library Monthly*
- Search for books, make lists, and save links like [CCBC's Multicultural literature](#)



Andrea Davis Pinkney was a magazine editor at *Essence* when she met and asked the publisher at Simon & Schuster, “Why aren’t publishers creating more diverse content – series, board books, narrative nonfiction?” Her question moved her into the publishing world and her ideas took her into writing.

- Circulation: Display the books with inviting signage, covers showing, with other books on a topic, or do book talks.

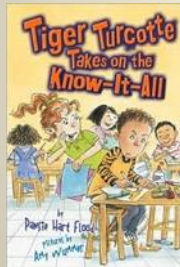


Reduce those barriers:

The CCBC notes the importance of small independent publishers, the commitment of individual editors, the importance of children's book awards to encourage writers to create stories for a diverse audience. And the charge for school library media specialists is to make the books available so that children will be aware that there are books in the library that reflect them in many ways.

It is important to realize that despite budgetary and time constraints, the library media specialist must provide books that readers need as well as books that they want.

A diverse collection will encourage the young reader.





Transitional readers of color just practicing their reading skills need reading material that reflects their experiences and their culture with characters that look like them.

(Hughes-Hassell, S., Koehler, E., & Barkley, H. A., 2010).

Children who cannot see themselves in the works they read are essentially inferring that they are less valued or invisible. Those who do not see others in books may gain a false sense of their importance.

(Sims Bishop, R., 2012). Reflections on the development of African American children's literature. *Journal Of Children's Literature*, 38(2), 5-13.

“When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what make us all human.”

Sims Bishop, R. (1990, Summer). Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*. 6(3). Found at <https://www.psdschools.org/webfm/8559>

## A diverse collection supports 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills



# We're taking teaching and learning Above & Beyond

Today's students are moving beyond the basics and embracing the 4C's — "super skills" for the 21st century!



### Communication

Sharing thoughts, questions, ideas, and solutions



### Collaboration

Working together to reach a goal — putting talent, expertise, and smarts to work



### Critical Thinking

Looking at problems in a new way, linking learning across subjects & disciplines



### Creativity

Trying new approaches to get things done equals innovation & invention



For more 4C resources from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, including the animated film ABOVE & BEYOND by Peter H. Reynolds & FableVision, journey to [www.p21.org/4Cs](http://www.p21.org/4Cs)



PARTNERSHIP FOR  
21ST CENTURY SKILLS



4.2.3 Maintain openness to new ideas by considering divergent opinions, changing opinions, or conclusions when evidence supports the change, and seeking information about new ideas encountered through academic or personal experiences.

4.4.4 Interpret new information based on cultural and social context.

1.1.7 Make sense of information gathered from diverse sources by identifying misconceptions, main and supporting ideas, conflicting information, and point of view or bias.

Selecting books is a privilege!

... Our decisions affect the capabilities of young readers to find books in which they can find themselves and in which they can meet new people.” (The Show Me Librarian, 2015)

“If the school library media specialist doesn’t have diverse books in the collection, it may be seen to the readers that these books and their characters are “less-than.” The absence of the choice eliminates other perspectives and experiences. It suggests that readers cannot handle, relate to or understand an “experience that does not mirror their own.” Not collecting and promoting quality titles “with diverse protagonists projects the selector’s bias onto the reader.” (2015.)

- What can we do to increase awareness of the problem within ourselves, our school and the community?
- How can we develop a collection that increases materials for a diverse population?
- Why is important that materials for a diverse population are acquired and made available, even actively marketed? Even if our school population is not so diverse?
- And where can we find guidance to develop the collection?

- Read, examine the collection, know the population.
- Find resources, make time, make lists, read.
- Students need to be able to see themselves in what they read and to see others and understand their cultures.
- Seek out resources from specific publishers and lists from ALA and CCBC

If we can always add to our awareness and then take tiny steps to make the school library collection more diverse, we will begin to touch the lives of all children in the library to move us all forward.

## References

- American Library Association (ALA). (2016). Frequently challenged books. A *Website of the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks>
- Atlantic (2015, July 4). Ta-Nehisi Coates reads from *Between the World and Me*. *Atlantic Video*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/397715/Between-the-World-and-Me-Teaser/>
- Coates, T.-N. (2012, September). Fear of a black president. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/09/fear-of-a-black-president/309064/>
- Dahlen, S.P. (2016). Picture this: Reflecting diversity in children's book publishing. *Sarahpark.com musings on Korean diaspora, children's literature, and adoption*. Retrieved from <https://readingspark.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/picture-this-reflecting-diversity-in-childrens-book-publishing/>
- Huyck, D. (2015). Diversity in children's books 2015 [Infographic]. Retrieved at [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/i9esis2d4pnk9mo/AADkqNuy36idy4TKYt\\_3Vmr0a?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/i9esis2d4pnk9mo/AADkqNuy36idy4TKYt_3Vmr0a?dl=0)
- Hughes-Hassell, S., Koehler, E., & Barkley, H. A. (2010). Supporting the literacy needs of African American transitional readers. *Teacher Librarian*, 37(5), 18-23.
- Kempf, JoAnne. (2015, July 13). ALA council resolutions respond to racism and gun violence. *American Library Association (ALA)*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2015/07/ala-council-resolutions-respond-racism-and-gun-violence>



Oxford. (2016). Racism. *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*. Retrieved at

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/racism>Panlay, S. (2016). Racism in contemporary African American children's and young adult literature. [New York, N.Y.] : Palgrave Macmillan.

Panlay, S. (2016). Racism in contemporary African American children's and young adult literature. New York, N.Y. : Palgrave/Macmillan.

Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. (2013, October 3) We're taking teaching and learning above and beyond. Retrieved from <http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/4csposter.pdf>

The Show Me Librarian. (2015, February 8). Selection is Privilege. Retrieved from <http://showmelibrarian.blogspot.com/2015/02/selection-is-privilege.html>

Sims Bishop, Rudine. (2012). Reflections on the development of African American children's literature. *Journal Of Children's Literature*, 38(2), 5-13.