



Emanuel School

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Monday 3rd - Friday 28th October

MONDAY



Marble Andromeda

Mr M Morrison

Chained to a jagged rock-face as a human sacrifice to a monstrous sea creature, Andromeda's fate is often depicted by Renaissance artists. In his most famous poem, the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid explains how she got there:

The Ethiopian queen Cassiopeia had offended the Nereids, a band of sea nymphs, by boasting that she was more beautiful. As punishment, Poseidon, the god of the sea, unleashed a gigantic sea serpent to terrorise the Ethiopian coastline. An oracle declared that the anger of the gods would only be appeased by the sacrifice of the offending queen's daughter, Andromeda, to the creature. Andromeda was duly tethered to a rock, ready for feeding time. But the Greek hero Perseus chanced to be flying by on winged sandals, having just decapitated the Gorgon Medusa. Perseus slew the sea monster, released Andromeda, and took her hand in marriage, turning her dissenting uncle to stone at the wedding reception with the help of Medusa's petrifying glare.

As Perseus hovers over the chained Andromeda, he falls in love, and Ovid tells us that if it were not for her hair fluttering in the breeze and the tears coursing down her cheeks, Perseus would have thought that she were a 'marble statue'

(*marmoreum... opus*).

The 'statue' imagery seems to hark back to the victims of the recently defeated Medusa who were turned to stony effigies as soon as they looked into the eyes of the Gorgon. Ovid tells us that Andromeda wanted to cover her eyes in modesty when addressed by her wing-footed lover, but her hands were tied behind her back. Instead, she averts her gaze with welled up tears. Salzman-Mitchell characterises the princess as the victim of a Medusa-esque male gaze: 'Andromeda is powerless, bound, a woman destined for marriage, fixed (turned into stone) by the male gaze, but who cannot, in her modesty, look back at the gaze of Man.'

But Andromeda also falls victim to the audience's gaze. Commentators and artists would have used the poem as a reference point and have taken the 'marble statue' metaphor as an indicator of Andromeda's white skin, associating her with the glossy white marble so ubiquitous in classical art and architecture.

Elizabeth McGrath's article 'The Black Andromeda' looks to differing descriptions of Andromeda's skin colour. In Book One of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*,

variously translated as 'The Art of Love' or 'The Skill of Seduction', Ovid assures his readers that they can find girlfriends in Rome without having to traverse the world for women, as Perseus did when 'he carried off Andromeda from the black Indians'. He later claims 'Andromeda's dark complexion was not criticised by Perseus' and comments on the white clothing she wore which complemented her dark skin tone.

The three Ovidian examples above characterise Andromeda as a dark-skinned woman, though McGrath argues that the more famous and canonical account of the myth in the *Metamorphoses* has coloured audiences' perceptions: 'the marble statue of the *Metamorphoses* effectively bleached Andromeda's colour away.'

What is striking is how metaphors and other stylistic devices have the power to subconsciously define racial identity. After all, as McGrath points out, Ovid's imagined statue may have been of black marble.



A word from the Headmaster

Mr Milne



'Since June 2020 and Emanuel's public commitment surrounding its approach to race and inequality throughout the school,

we have continued with a host of initiatives and wide-reaching cultural approaches. At the heart of these has been the sustained use of pupil voice in surveys, through committees, all reporting to pupil assemblies and all school staff on the positive and necessary changes being made in our community.

The flagship group for our progress has been the Archer group, led by pupils and the senior tutor, and populated by colleagues and young people across all ages and backgrounds. Of course, as with so many cultural matters in a school, it is everyone's responsibility to create and sustain change, but having a high-profile group well known to all pupils, and being in communication with the governing body and me, has been vital.

This year's Black History newsletter and its associated publications will run for a fortnight, and it is great to know our efforts and everyone's commitment runs throughout the year.'

The importance of global history

Ms L Aitken-Burt

In Sept 2022, Harper Collins published a new series of textbooks called 'Knowing World History'. I pitched and co-authored these four books, writing new units on global topics to bring different perspectives and histories to the KS3 curriculum.

These are the first textbooks to offer such breadth and scope in a KS3 curriculum that give a narrative of stories told from indigenous perspectives, rather than purely their interactions with Britain. The Medieval Islamic World, African and Chinese kingdoms, Mughal India, indigenous Americans, Ottoman Turkey and Edo Japan to name but a few, all get their voice in these new enquiries. I am very excited to be introducing these global topics to Emanuel students this year. During my research when writing the books, I noticed an intriguing inconsistency with the way in which some cultures have been treated in historical scholarship. For example one of the reasons that African kingdoms have been

so relegated in historical research is because of the tradition of oral history rather than written history across much of the continent. Oral history is a source of information about the past found in the stories passed down through the generations, not only by families but by highly skilled orators whose job was to remember vast amounts of information. But the epic stories from Greek and Roman myth, not least of all Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were also passed down in this way for centuries. The historians who criticised African cultures for not writing down their history, were failing to remember that the western literature they so idolised also stemmed from an oral tradition.

I hope that the new global modules that Emanuel students will now learn about will give them a wider grounding in the history of the world and equip them with better analytical skills for the future.

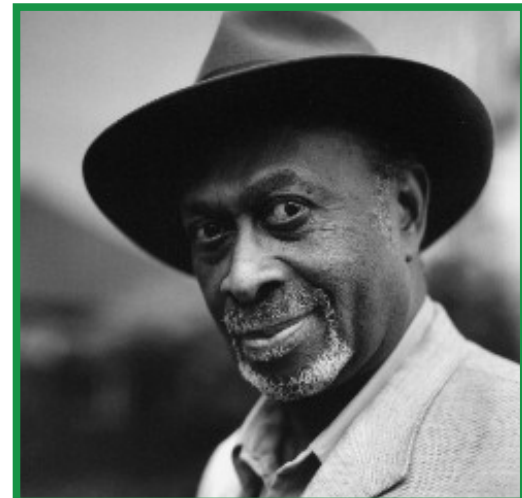


James Berry 1924-2017

One of the first black poets in Britain to achieve national recognition, Berry rose to prominence in 1981 when he won the National Poetry Competition. His five collections of poetry and his stories and poems for children have been widely acclaimed. As an editor of two influential anthologies, Berry was at the forefront of championing West Indian/British writing and his role as an educator had a significant impact in mediating that community's experience to the wider society. Berry was awarded an OBE in 1990.

James Berry spent his childhood in a village in Jamaica, before working in the United States; he finally settled in Britain in 1948 where he remained for the rest of his life.

"America had run into a shortage of farm labourers and was recruiting workers from Jamaica. I was 18 at the time. My friends and I, all anxious for improvement and change, were snapped up for this war work and we felt this to be a tremendous prospect for us. But we soon realised, as we had been warned, that there was a problem in the United States that we were not familiar with in the Caribbean. America was not a free place for black people. When I came back from America, pretty soon the same old desperation of being stuck began to affect me. When the Windrush came along, it was godsend, but I wasn't able to get on the boat.... I had to wait for the second ship to make the journey that year, the SS Orbita."



James Berry

Settling in 1948 in Great Britain, he attended night school, trained and worked as a telegrapher in London, while also writing. He said: "I knew I was right for London and London was right for me. London had books and accessible libraries."

Being angry about injustice experienced by himself and his family motivates some of his poetry, particularly when writing about his father's ill treatment at the hands of his white employers. However, the overriding tone of his poetry is one of celebration. Without denying the hurt of the colonial experience, he chooses to defy prejudice through an emphasis on unity, as in the closing image of his poem 'Benediction'.

'One' was written for children and celebrates our individuality and unique sense of self. (It is part of one of the primary ambitions 'Powerful Performance Poetry' programme this year).

Benediction

Thanks to the ear
that someone may hear
Thanks to seeing
that someone may see
Thanks to feeling
that someone may feel
Thanks to touch
that one may be touched
Thanks to flowering of white moon
and spreading shawl of black night
holding villages and cities together.

One

Only one of me
and nobody can get a second one
from a photocopy machine.

Nobody has the fingerprints I have.
Nobody can cry my tears, or laugh my laugh
or have my expectancy when I wait.

But anybody can mimic my dance with my dog.
Anybody can howl how I sing out of tune.
And mirrors can show me multiplied
many times, say, dressed up in red
or dressed up in grey.

Nobody can get into my clothes for me,
or feel my fall for me, or do my running.
Nobody hears my music for me, either.

I am just this one.
Nobody else makes the words
I shape with sound, when I talk.

But anybody can act how I stutter in a rage.
And anybody can copy echoes I make.
And mirrors can show me multiplied
many times, say, dressed up in green
or dressed up in blue.

Black History Month was founded in 1926 to honour the accomplishments of people of African origin. The celebration originally only lasted a week. They concluded that there are just too many positive things to discuss in that limited time. Carter G. Woodson, a historian, picked the 2nd week of February since it fell on both Frederick Douglass' and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays.

October is a suitable time to really think about the additions to our lives made by those who are black. Those that used strong, powerful voices to change the world for good. What would life be like if Rosa Parks had not insisted on fighting for a seat on the bus? Or Martin Luther King Jr. had decided not to share his dream in fear that someone would arrest him? And if Nelson Mandela had not joined the ANC the world would still have mistakes to solve. They righted our thoughts and now the world lives in better harmony.

It is not just in civil rights where people have made their mark. Imagine a world without Louis Armstrong, Aretha Franklin, Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Tupac Shakur, and Beyonce. Music would be quite dull without them! Without black people's contributions to music, we would be without jazz, blues, rap, hip hop, R & B, and even rock and roll. Their contribution adds a real spark of life to music.

Of course, you should not forget the amazing inventions that have been created: Garrett Morgan and the traffic light, Marie Van Brittan Brown, and the security system and even George Speck and crisps.

These are only a few out of the thousands of their contribution to society and our day-to-day lives. From civil rights to art and culture, we should be proud and grateful for their creations and everything they did to make our world a better place.



Nelson Mandela



Aretha Franklin



Louis Armstrong

