



Many Voices Collection - Frequently Asked Questions

Who are we?

The project has been created jointly by [Oxford Poetry Library](#) and [The Children's Allotment](#) and organised by:

Alice Hemming: educator and co-founder of The Children's Allotment

Sarah Thorne: parent and educator and co-founder of The Children's Allotment

Phoebe Nicholson: poet, founder of the Oxford Poetry Library

Why did we set up this project?

Following the racist incidents of 2020 including the murder of George Floyd, and the resulting focus on the global Black Lives Matter movement, a group of parents and educators connected to The Children's Allotment and the Oxford Poetry Library came together to question the racism implicit in the education system and the kinds of books and learning materials around us also in Oxford.

We realised that we and many white families we knew had shelves filled with children's books mostly by white authors and centering white protagonists. On doing more research, we found that children's literature by Black authors and/or featuring Black characters were less widely available in public libraries and were expensive or difficult to buy in bookshops.

The Children's Allotment as an education project has as part of its core values the aspiration to be actively anti-racist and aims to create a space where children will learn to think critically and become allies and active agents for social change. It is important to us that the books and resources that we use in our space were reflective of this. As parents, some members of our group also wanted to be able to access more representative books to read to their own children.



Oxford Poetry Library, too, aspires to encourage access to diverse literature, platforming and showcasing writers who may not necessarily have a mainstream audience. We believe that literature and poetry can enrich lives, build connections between people, and encourage new ways of looking at the world. However, this is only possible when the literature being read and shared is truly representative of its readers, and the different backgrounds and demographics in our community.

As white people, what is our role in running this project?

Making a commitment to being anti-racist is a process of learning. We felt that as white people, it was our collective responsibility to educate ourselves and the children around us - not the responsibility of people of colour. We wanted to use the organisations we were involved in and the funding we had access to to platform and support Black writing which can help educate around anti-racism.

What is the Many Voices Collection?

The Many Voices Collection is a collection of children's and young adults' books to cater to kids from earliest stages of their life through to teenagehood, with books featuring Black characters or written by Black writers. [Check out the collection here.](#)



Over time, we hope to expand the collection to include titles authored by and featuring characters portraying other groups often underrepresented in children's books including those who are queer, disabled, working class or have different family structures.



Who is the Many Voices Collection for?

Anyone! Whether it's Black children and families who want to see more characters on the pages that look like them or represent their cultural experiences or white families who want to educate their children about the reality of racism, read more diversely and encounter a broader range of experiences in their reading.

How was the Many Voices Collection set up? What resources did we use?

To create our collection of 50+ books, we did lots of reading and research as well as consulting with other parents, educators, experts and members of the community. Our resources are below for anyone wanting to do their own reading:

Resources and reading lists:

[Diverse BookFinder](#)
[Social Justice Books](#)
[A Mighty Girl](#)
[The Conscious Kid](#)
[Grassroots Community Foundation](#)
[We Need Diverse Books](#)
[Seven Stories Diverse Voices](#)
[The Brown Bookshelf](#)
[Black Children's Books and Authors](#)
[Rich in Color](#)
[The Guardian](#)
[New York Public Library](#)
[Huffington Post](#)

Publishers, bookshops and booksellers which specialize in diverse and Black writing:

[Barefoot Books](#)
[Knights Of](#)
[Lantana Publishing](#)
[Melanin Origins](#)
[Plum Street Press](#)
[Tiny Owl](#)
[Letterbox Library](#)
[Round Table Books](#)
[Just Like Me!](#)
[Shift Book Box](#)
[Ourshelves](#)

Further reading:

[Guardian article](#) - *Children's books eight times as likely to feature animal main characters as BAME people*
[Embrace Race](#) - *8 tips for choosing good picture books*
[Diverse Bookfinder](#) - *How to Evaluate the Quality of Racially/Culturally Diverse Books*
[Reading While White](#) - *Further reading*