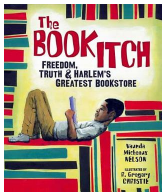


The Book Itch Freedom, Truth & Harlem's Greatest Bookstore



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ISBN-13: 978-0761339434
C3 Framework Key term:
Collective action: Activities
undertaken by people with
a shared interest in
promoting change or on an
issue about which members
of the group agree.

SYNOPSIS

This story is told by Lewis, whose dad established the National Memorial African Bookstore – a store devoted to books by and about black people. The father, Lewis Michaux believed that knowledge is power and referred to the store as “The House of Common Sense and Proper Propaganda.”. The store became an important landmark for the civil rights movement. Michaux became Malcolm X advisor. Malcolm X advocated for public policy changes to provide better food, clothing, housing, education, and jobs to black people.

DISCUSSION

Contextualize: African American leaders such as Frederick Douglass and Booker, T. Washington, recognized literacy as fundamental to progress. In the south, segregated public libraries for African Americans were underfunded. In the North, public libraries offered few or no books about African scholarships and cultural tradition. Malcolm X is an example – he taught himself to read and write in prison by copying a dictionary and memorizing the definitions of words. His life, sense of freedom, and public work changed as a result. **Say:** Lewis Micheaux was not the first to understand that knowledge

is power. Slaveowners in the southern states including Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, North and South Carolina and Virginia knew that to control their slaves could they needed to deny them education and access to books. A white person caught teaching black people to read and write would be sent to jail and forced to pay a large fine. **Ask:** What power does literacy give to people? How can people use information and literacy to address discrimination and poverty? **Say:** Michaux believed that education and knowledge are essential for gaining self-respect and self-esteem. **Ask:** How can education promote self-esteem? Why does it matter that bookstores will have books written by African American authors and that newspapers will publish articles by African American journalists?

ETHICS CONNECTION

Say: We will hold a debate about the ethical responsibility of book publishing companies to publish books written by African American authors. Teams in favor of a new bill requiring at least one new book a year may mention the importance of African American voice and authentic identity in the books. Opponents may mention that other criteria, such as economic considerations of sales, should determine what books will be published. Students can work in groups to conduct research online. **Say:** You should model respectful listening when each team presents. You may not interrupt the presenters. However, you can take notes and write down your questions. We will allocate three minutes for questions and answers after each team's presentation.

FUN ACTIVITY

Say: Imagine you own a book publishing company and would like to promote a debut novel by an African American author. On one page, create a marketing plan for publicizing the book. What messages will you send to the press and social media? Focus on encouraging the public to read more stories written from the perspective of African American writers.