

Turner, G.T. (1989). [Take a Walk in Their Shoes](#). New York: Puffin Books.

OVERVIEW

The history of black America has yet to be fully revealed. Glennette Turner revives the lives and works of legendary black men, women, and children. She speaks to readers' emotions, and she attempts to inspire all ethnicities. This remembrance and tribute emerges in biographical form. Its parts are to be told in the rich tradition of storytelling that compliments the intellect of black Americans, and in dramatic form. The following pieces celebrate our past:

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.** As a boy, Martin and his father were asked to browse only in the back of a shoe store. He realized then, that he was not truly free. As a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, he had devoted his life to helping end discrimination. The play that follows his biography encourages young people to learn more about the places where he gave speeches and the path that made him our hero.
- **Rosa Parks.** Rosa's family was surprised to see her play such a pivotal role in the fight for black equality. When required by the "Jim Crow" laws to give up her seat on a bus, she refused. Her refusal was just the spark that the civil rights movement needed. The city of Montgomery, Alabama joined her in boycott of those buses and eventually in victory. The play that follows her biography takes youths through her triumphant stand.
- **Arthur A. Schomburg.** The quest that Arthur took provided much of our documentation on black role models and pioneers. Noticing a lack of black inventors, artists, and preachers, he set out to compile cases of intrigue, talent, and valor. His work was a success: he found great contributors worldwide. The play that follows his biography envisions students researching his life and ambitions at the Cullen Library.
- **Leontyne Price.** Leontyne Price was an opera star, at the Metropolitan Opera House. As a young girl, she began singing in her Mississippi church. Most importantly, with her stardom, she used her powerful talent to speak for the civil rights cause. The play that follows her biography explores the thoughts and visions of the many

who were amazed by her when she was very young.

- **Charles White.** As a famous painter, Charles portrayed the vast depth of black people in their struggle for freedom. The play that follows his biography shows how his talents may have developed from the artwork displayed on his mother's window shades, to his works that we revere today.
- **Garrett A. Morgan.** We can certainly appreciate Mr. Morgan for his numerous inventions. Thanks to his problem solving, we now have such luxuries as the gas mask. He is also responsible for the basis of our modern stop lights. The play that follows his biography—a monologue of a radio interview—highlights his struggle, as a black man, for acceptance as an inventor.
- **Daniel "Chappie" James.** Chappie was our first black four-star general and is commemorated for his 179 combat missions in the Korean and Vietnam wars. In a crucial time for blacks striving to gain status in the military, he was a trailblazer. The play that follows his biography is of an imaginary reunion of several black military pilots who were trained at the Tuskegee Institute.
- **Charles Drew.** This star athlete also brings pride to the field of science. He was awarded the Spingarn Medal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1944 for his work in creating the "Blood Bank." The play that follows his biography travels through dialogue educating a new student at the Drew School about this important man, through paintings displayed throughout the school.
- **Frederick Douglass.** Frederick was a slave who was taught to read by his master's wife. He later took on several antislavery campaigns through the mediums of The North Star newspaper, several noted speeches, his position as the Minister of Haiti, and a defender of the women's right to vote—at the Seneca Falls meetings. The play that follows his biography is a vivid depiction of him and his wife assisting Harriet Tubman in her efforts in the "Underground Railroad."

Other individuals are studied and celebrated, including Ida B. Wells, Oscar Micheaux, Mary McLeod Bethune, Leroy "Satchel" Paige, and Maggie Lena Walker.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- How many black historians, freedom fighters, church leaders, and talented artists can you name well enough to pass on to your children?
- If black history is something that you or your youth lack appreciation for, or the knowledge of, where can you go for more information and resources?
- Are there ways that you and your youth group can further celebrate outstanding black citizens in your community?
- Are there different ethnic groups that would help your program for you to become familiar with?
- Is there someone who has trouble understanding you or your youth, or who you could help to learn more about you? Could they walk in your shoes?

IMPLICATIONS

- Black role models are strong and great resources for our youth.
- Many history books have left out significant stories of black culture and achievements.
- Creative drama and thematic teaching can enhance classrooms.
- More research must be done and more credit must be given to black leaders in missionary works, as well.
- Many have suffered for the freedoms that we take for granted.
- History is comprised not only of stories that we wish to remember, but of stories that we may wish to forget.

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