

ExxonMobil

DISCOVERY SERIES



Colored Carnegie with Urban Souls Dance Company



urban
souls

THE
HOBBY
CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

2026-2027 Season 5th Grade Curriculum Guide

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About the Performance

Colored Carnegie

Colored Carnegie was inspired by Black Houston and conceived and directed by Harrison Guy as part of a commission by Performing Arts Houston that premiered in November 2021. The show was choreographed by Harrison Guy and dancers from Urban Souls Dance Company with music by Dr. John Cornelius and set design by Edgar Guajardo. The Houston Colored Carnegie Library was a segregated branch of what is now the Houston Public Library. It opened in 1913 in Houston's Fourth Ward and was one of the first public libraries for African Americans in the southwest. But according to Guy, "the Colored Carnegie story really began in 1907" when Houston's public library denied service to a group of African American teachers.

In 1904 Andrew Carnegie gave a \$50,000 grant to the city of Houston for a public library to open on the corner of McKinney and Travis, but only for white citizens. The city offered no comparable library service to Black citizens who made up nearly 40% of Houston. In response, a group led by Black educator E. O. Smith opened a one-room library in the Fourth Ward and then approached the city's librarian and Mayor to request a separate "colored library" grant from Carnegie. Their application was approved in 1909, and Andrew Carnegie donated \$15,000 for the Colored Carnegie Library to open in 1913.

Enjoy a real-life story told through an immersive fine arts experience that includes 8 dancers, music, a narrator, and creative theatrical arts.



THE
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Urban Souls Dance Company

Founded in 2004, by Artistic Director Harrison Guy, is a social arts organization rooted in equity, community, and the power of Black storytelling. Through dance, education, and advocacy, Urban Souls fosters connection and builds community by uplifting the Black experience and advancing healing and justice. Guided by the belief that art can transform people, and people can transform the world, the company creates bold, inclusive artistic works that challenge divisions, celebrate diversity, and inspire society to move closer together



Colored Carnegie Library



HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

African American History
Research Center

On June 19, 1865, enslaved Texans were granted their freedom. Known as “freedmen”, they would soon move from Galveston, East Texas and other areas of the state to Houston to begin their new lives as free people. The area of Houston in which they settled became known as Freedmen’s Town. Freedmen’s Town was located just outside Downtown Houston and had originally been swamp land that no one wanted because it often flooded, but it was the only place that the freedmen could go. They built homes, they built churches and they built schools. The first school for free Black children in Houston was called Gregory Institute and was in the heart of Freedmen’s Town. The school opened in 1870 and was later called Gregory Elementary School. In 1926, another building was built and that building still exists today!

Despite all of the good things that Black people were doing for themselves, there were still things they couldn’t do. There were stores they could not shop in, restaurants they could not eat in and they were not allowed to go to the public library. A group of teachers and community members, led by Mr. Ernest Smith, worked together to open a small one-room library in the high school. Ms. Mary Emma Myers became its librarian, making her the first Black librarian in Houston. Even though they were successful in creating this small library, they didn’t stop there. The group took it upon themselves to apply to receive money from Andrew Carnegie, a wealthy businessman from the north who was giving money to African American communities across the South to open libraries. In 1909, their application was approved, and they received \$15,000 to build the library. That was a lot of money back then; in fact, today it would equal over half a million dollars! Houston’s Colored Carnegie Library opened in 1913 and was the jewel of the Black community. The building was designed by Mr. William Sydney Pittman, a famous Black architect and civil rights activist, who just happened to be married to Booker T.

4 Washington’s daughter!



50 Years of History

Once in the new building, Ms. Bessie Osborne was selected to be the librarian. Later, Ms. Florence Alma Bandy-Norman became the first Black librarian in Houston to earn a degree in library science. As head librarian, Ms. Bandy-Norman managed the library’s collection which held over 35,000 books! The library did so many cool things – they had reading programs, book clubs, they had guest speakers and even held night school for adults.

After serving the community for over 50 years, the Colored Carnegie library closed in 1961, making way for the Houston Public Library you know today! There are now 36 neighborhood libraries and three (3) research centers across the city, including the African American History Research Center, which operates out of the former Gregory Elementary School building. Everyone is welcome and there’s no cost to get in.





About the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts opened to the public in 2002 in downtown Houston, at the edge of the city's renowned Theater District. The district is home to several major performing arts organizations, including Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony, Performing Arts Houston, Theatre Under The Stars, DaCamera, and Alley Theatre. Located beside Tranquility Park and one block from Houston City Hall, the Hobby Center was named in honor of former Texas lieutenant governor and Houston businessman William P. Hobby Jr. after his family foundation made a significant contribution to the project. The Hobby Center was built on the site formerly occupied by the Houston Music Hall and Sam Houston Coliseum, both of which were demolished in 1998. Today, the Hobby Center includes three performance spaces designed specifically for theater, music, and live performance experiences:

- **Sarofim Hall** is a 2,650-seat proscenium theater designed to accommodate large-scale touring Broadway productions and major live performances. Resident companies include Theatre Under The Stars and Broadway Across America. The hall's design combines grandeur with theatrical elegance. Golden latticework frames the space, while multi-storied gold-leaf columns stand in contrast to deep midnight-blue walls. Overhead, the Joe and Lee Jamail Celestial Dome Ceiling features twinkling fiber-optic stars arranged to mirror the Texas night sky.
- **Zilkha Hall** is an intimate 500-seat "jewel-box" theater, a term used to describe smaller performance spaces designed with rich detail, warmth, and close audience connection. Home to many of Houston's local arts organizations, the hall features excellent acoustics, deep-rose tones, and walnut wood accents across two seating levels.
- **The Founders Club** is an intimate live music venue with cabaret-style seating. Guests may purchase tables of four or be seated with others, creating a social and relaxed atmosphere. The series features both local performers and nationally recognized artists in a format not commonly found in Houston. Concerts span a variety of genres, including Broadway songbook, jazz, and world music.

ExxonMobil DISCOVERY SERIES

The ExxonMobil Discovery Series is the Hobby Center's flagship education program, welcoming 5th grade students from across Houston to experience live performances by local and touring artists. Aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the series brings dance, music, and theater to life in ways that connect directly to what students are learning in the classroom. Every performance is free—including transportation—and includes curriculum materials and artist Q&As that deepen the experience.

For the 2026-27 school year, the Hobby Center is thrilled to be partnering with 22+ school districts to serve nearly 50,000 5th graders.

Special thanks to lead underwriter ExxonMobil and generous supporters: Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, Elkins Foundation, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, The John M. O'Quinn Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, H-E-B, Vivian L. Smith Foundation, and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

Theater Etiquette

Before you come to the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Please take some time to talk with your students about what to expect. Going to a live performance is a group experience unlike any other, and many students are more familiar with going to the movies or sporting events. Please help them prepare for what they'll see and how they should act. Other things to Keep in Mind: Make sure your students use the restroom before they leave school or at the theater before the show. If you get up during the performance, you may miss the best part! The performance runs approximately one hour long with no intermission. In entering or exiting the theater, safety is the primary concern. Please follow instructions from the house managers and ushers in taking your seats.

Going to a performance is different than going to a movie:

- This production is performed live. The performers can see, hear and react to the audience!
- Audience members can show the performers when they appreciate their performance! If something is funny, you can laugh! If the performers are doing a great job, then you can clap!
- Sometimes, the performers will ask you to participate by singing or clapping; please do not talk unless the performers ask you to!
- At the end of the show, the performers will bow. This is called a curtain call. If you really loved the show, you can give them a standing ovation to show that you appreciate their hard work!
- School clothes are appropriate, but some people like to dress up to go to the theater. Just make sure you are comfortable.

Going to a performance is the same as going to a movie:

- The lights dim before the performance begins and the theater stays dark during the show.
- Audience members are expected to stay quiet in their seats during the performance.
- Audience members may NOT take any pictures or video during the performance. (This is distracting to the performers and other audience members and this show contains copyrighted artistic material.)
- All cell phones and other electronic devices should be powered OFF or put on SILENT as soon as you enter the theater.

VISIT RESTROOM BEFORE - NOT DURING.

ARRIVE EARLY.

QUIET & SEATED DURING SHOW.

NO PHOTOS OR VIDEOS DURING SHOW.

PHONES OFF/SILENCED.

RESPECT THE SPACE & OTHERS.

LISTEN & ENGAGE.

APPLAUD APPROPRIATELY.

Vocabulary

- **Access:** Being able to use something that helps you learn, grow, or participate.
- **Allyship:** Supportive and collaborative partnership between individuals or groups, especially in advocating for a common cause.
- **Andrew Carnegie:** A philanthropist who funded libraries, including the Colored Carnegie Library, and contributed to various public institutions.
- **Autonomy:** Independence and self-governance; the ability to make decisions and act independently.
- **Booker T. Washington:** An influential African American educator, author, and advisor who advocated for vocational education and economic empowerment for Black Americans.
- **Colored Carnegie Library:** A segregated public library for African Americans funded by Andrew Carnegie, providing educational resources and community support.
- **Demolished:** Completely destroyed or torn down, often referring to buildings or structures.
- **Ernest Smith:** A historical figure mentioned in the script, educator who led a committee that opened a one-room library in 1909.
- **Freedman's Town:** A historically significant area in Houston associated with communities of formerly enslaved individuals after the Civil War.
- **Frederick Douglass:** An escaped slave who became a prominent abolitionist, author, and speaker advocating for the rights of African Americans and women.
- **Generations:** Successive groups of individuals in a family or community, often linked by common experiences and heritage.
- **Grant:** A financial contribution or donation provided to support a specific project, cause, or institution.
- **Inception:** The beginning or starting point of something, such as an idea, project, or organization.
- **Julia Ideson:** A historical figure mentioned in the script, pioneer librarian and civic activist, and first head of Houston Public Library.
- **Legacy:** Something handed down from the past, often in the form of traditions, values, or achievements.
- **Maya Angelou:** A renowned African American poet, author, and civil rights activist known for her impactful literary contributions.
- **Persist:** To continue with determination and perseverance despite challenges or obstacles.
- **Resist:** To oppose or withstand an action, force, or influence; to refuse to yield.
- **Vindication:** The act of proving someone's innocence or justifying a belief, often after facing doubt or criticism.
- **William Sydney Pittman:** A historical figure mentioned in the performance, American architect who designed Colored Carnegie library, and the first African American to graduate from the Drexel Institute of Art, Science.

PRE-SHOW

DISCUSSION

History & Change

- Why was it important for Houston's Black community to create the Colored Carnegie Library?
- How can ordinary people create change when something isn't fair?
- What can we learn from local history that still matters in our community today?

Storytelling Through Dance

- This performance tells a true story through movement, music, and spoken word. How can dance communicate ideas without using many words?
- What clues, such as movement, music, costumes, or expressions—do you think will help you understand the story?
- As you watch, what kinds of movements might represent courage, hope, determination, or resilience?

Access & Community

- Why are libraries, schools, and other community spaces important for everyone?
- What makes a community feel welcoming and inclusive?
- How can people work together to create opportunities for others?



All performance photos by Lynn Lane

PRE-SHOW

ACTIVITIES



All performance photos by Lynn Lane

Access Brainstorm

Discuss what the word access means and create a class list of places that help people learn and grow. Talk about why everyone should have the opportunity to use those spaces.

Movement Without Words

Using only movement and facial expressions, act out words like hope, determination, belonging, or courage. Can your classmates identify the emotion or idea?

Community Sketch

Draw a place that helps people learn, gather, or grow, such as a library, school, park, or community center. Share why that place is important to your community.

History Timeline

Create a simple timeline of the Colored Carnegie Library, from the community's request for a library to its opening and lasting impact on Houston.

Career Exploration

Explore the many careers that help preserve history and bring performances to life. Beyond the dancers, who researches the history, designs the set, preserves archives, manages the library, or choreographs the movement?

PRE-SHOW

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

Worksheet - Pave Your Own Brick Road to Carnegie

Name: _____

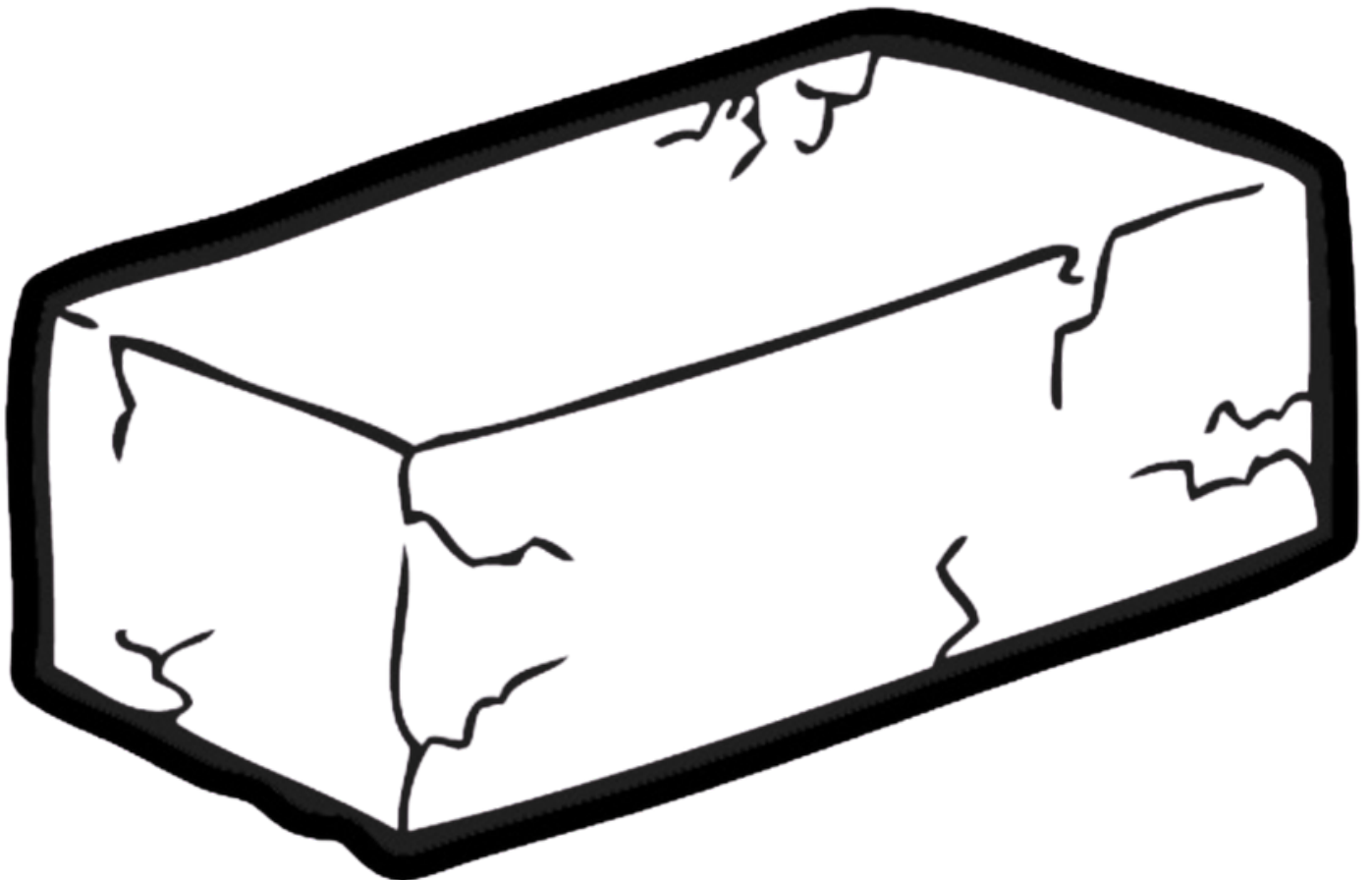
Date: _____

Building the Path to Our Dreams: The Brick Project Inspired by the legacy of the Colored Carnegie Library and the power of community, our Brick Project invites students to design their own symbolic bricks. Each brick represents a step toward building a stronger community or a personal journey toward achieving dreams and aspirations. Just as the Colored Carnegie Library paved the way for education and unity, each student's brick will contribute to a larger path—whether it leads to their future ambitions or honors the history of those who built the foundation of their community. Through creativity and reflection, students will share their personal visions and dreams, and together, we will build a collective story of resilience, ambition, and hope.

STEP 1: Print or Draw your own Brick.

STEP 2: Decorate your brick with images, items, or text that are meaningful to you.

STEP 3: Collectively place the bricks together to pave your way to Carnegie.



FIFTH GRADE

TEKS Alignment

ELAR & READING- §110.7

TEKS: 5.6(E), 5.7(E), 5.11(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students interpret historical events and themes through dance, narration, and music, making inferences about character, setting, conflict, and message while connecting the performance to informational and historical texts.

Science -§112.16

TEKS: 5.6(D), 5.7(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students observe how dancers use force, balance, coordination, and controlled movement to communicate ideas and emotions through performance.

Mathematics - §111.7

TEKS: 5.1(A), 5.4(B), 5.9(A), 5.10 (F)

Student Learning Connection:

Students use historical information about the Colored Carnegie Library to solve real-world problems involving funding, construction costs, book collections, and community use. They can compare Andrew Carnegie's \$15,000 grant with other expenses, organize library data in graphs or tables, and create a simple budget for a community library or learning space.

Social Studies - §113.16

TEKS: 5.4(A), 5.5(B), 5.22(B)

Student Learning Connection:

Students explore the history of Houston's Colored Carnegie Library and examine how community members worked together to expand educational opportunities during segregation.

Health - §115.17

TEKS: 5.1 (B), 5.3(A), 5.5(B)

Student Learning Connection:

Students reflect on themes of belonging, fairness, empathy, and resilience while considering how communities respond to injustice through cooperation and leadership.

Fine Arts -§117.114

TEKS:(a1), (a2), (a3)

Student Learning Connection:

Students analyze how choreography, music, expression, and theatrical design communicate historical events and tell a true story without relying primarily on spoken dialogue.

FIFTH GRADE

STAAR Alignment



RLA

STAAR Reporting Category:

*Reading Comprehension,
Vocabulary, Author's Craft,
Composition, Inquiry & Research*

Student Learning Connection

Analyze how dance, narration, music, and visual storytelling communicate a true historical event. Make inferences, identify theme and point of view, and connect the performance to informational and historical texts.

Mathematics

STAAR Reporting Category:

*Patterns, Data Analysis, and
Mathematical Relationships*

Student Learning Connection

Interpret timelines, compare historical dates, organize information, and analyze numerical data related to the Colored Carnegie Library. Apply mathematical reasoning to understand how communities planned, funded, and measured the growth of educational opportunities.

Science

STAAR Reporting Category:

Force, Motion, and Energy

Student Learning Connection

Observe how dancers use force, balance, coordination, and controlled movement to communicate ideas and emotions. Explore how the human body uses motion and energy to tell a story without words.

FIFTH GRADE

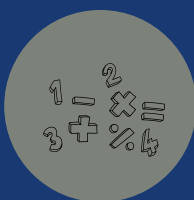
Curriculum Connections



English Language Arts

In The Classroom

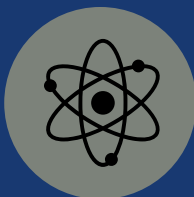
Explore the history of the Colored Carnegie Library by analyzing theme, historical context, and point of view. Students can compare historical accounts with the performance and discuss how dance, music, narration, and spoken word communicate meaning.



Mathematics

In The Classroom

Apply sequencing, timelines, data analysis, and mathematical reasoning while exploring the history of the Colored Carnegie Library. Students can organize historical events, compare dates, interpret historical data, and examine how community planning and funding supported educational access.



Science

In The Classroom

Investigate how force, motion, balance, and the human body work together to communicate ideas through dance. Students can observe how movement and energy help performers express emotions and tell a historical story without words.



Social Studies

In The Classroom

Explore the history of the Colored Carnegie Library, segregation in Texas, and the power of civic action. Students can examine how Black Houstonians worked together to expand access to education and how local history continues to shape communities today.



Health / SEL

In The Classroom

Reflect on empathy, belonging, perseverance, and community leadership through the experiences portrayed in the performance. Students can discuss fairness, inclusion, and how collaboration helps create stronger, more connected communities.

Discussion



Story & History

- What true story was this performance telling?
- What moments helped you understand the history without words?
- Why do you think this story was important to share through dance?

Movement & Meaning

- How did the dancers use their bodies to show struggle or hope?
- What movements felt strong, heavy, fast, or slow? Why?
- How did timing or repetition help tell the story?



Emotion & Empathy

- How did the performance make you feel?
- When did you feel empathy for the people in the story?
- What emotions do you think the dancers wanted the audience to feel?

Community & Access

- Why was the Colored Carnegie Library important to the community?
- What does access mean now compared to the past?
- Who should have access to learning spaces today?



POST-SHOW Activities

Reflective Writing

- **Community Journal**

Write a journal entry from the perspective of a student, librarian, teacher, or community member visiting the Colored Carnegie Library for the first time. Describe why the library mattered and how it created new opportunities for learning.



Movement & Performance

- **Dance the Story**

Working with a partner or small group, create a short movement sequence that tells one moment from the story of the Colored Carnegie Library. Use movement, facial expressions, and levels to communicate the story without words.

Create Design

- **Design an Inclusive Library**

Design a library that welcomes everyone. Include spaces for reading, learning, community events, technology, and local history. Explain how your design helps people feel included and connected.



Communication & Collaboration

- **Community Action Challenge**

Identify a need in your school or community related to learning, literacy, or belonging. Working as a team, develop a simple action plan that could make a positive difference and present your idea to the class.

Career Spotlight

- **Preserving History**

Research a career that helps preserve history or bring stories to life, such as a librarian, archivist, museum educator, historian, choreographer, costume designer, or curator. Explain how this career helps communities learn from the past and why it is important today.



POST-SHOW

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

Worksheet - Colored Carnegie Word Search

Name: _____

Date: _____

J	R	E	H	C	A	E	T	L	L	L	M	X	U	A
N	E	M	D	E	E	R	F	O	I	C	L	J	U	C
V	A	Z	P	N	U	M	O	B	H	W	E	C	A	N
B	N	Y	M	I	H	H	R	Z	O	N	F	Y	K	D
O	S	R	T	O	C	A	G	X	U	J	T	C	L	J
O	K	O	U	S	R	W	L	J	S	M	Y	E	R	S
K	C	T	V	Y	G	P	A	A	T	F	W	X	K	E
S	I	S	T	Y	U	R	T	N	O	R	P	E	X	I
F	R	I	L	B	F	F	E	T	N	I	U	N	A	B
L	B	H	L	Y	S	Q	O	G	E	E	E	A	T	P
P	L	I	R	A	O	T	S	U	O	I	E	M	M	O
B	C	V	T	G	Q	B	N	J	R	R	R	T	C	R
L	I	B	R	A	R	I	A	N	M	T	Y	T	I	M
E	U	E	D	B	D	S	U	D	C	E	H	I	T	U

BOOKS
FOURTH
HISTORY
LIBRARY
PITTMAN

BRICKS
FREEDMEN
HOUSTON
MYERS
SCHOOL

CARNEGIE
GREGORY
LIBRARIAN
PUBLIC
TEACHER



POST-SHOW EXTENDED LEARNING

CHECK OUT THE STORY



Complete a library card inspired by Houston's Colored Carnegie Library

Name: _____

Date: _____

A library card represents access—to books, information, ideas, and opportunity.
Use what you learned from the performance to complete this special history card.

1

COMPLETE THE HISTORY CARD

COLORED CARNEGIE LIBRARY

HOUSTON, TEXAS

OPENED: 1913

CARDHOLDER NAME: _____

CARD NUMBER: HOU-1913-_____

COMMUNITY SERVED: _____

THIS LIBRARY WAS CREATED BECAUSE: _____

THIS CARD OPENS THE DOOR TO...

☐ knowledge ☐ opportunity ☐ community ☐ history

One program or resource the library offered: _____

One person or group who helped make access possible: _____

MEMBER OF A
LEARNING COMMUNITY

DRAW A SYMBOL FOR
ACCESS & BELONGING

2

THE CHECKOUT RECORD

Fill in each row with an idea you are taking away from the performance.

I CHECKED OUT...	EVIDENCE FROM THE PERFORMANCE	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY
A new fact		
An example of courage		
An example of community action		

3

RETURN DATE: THE FUTURE

Libraries lend books, but their ideas stay with us.

One fact Houston should always remember about the Colored Carnegie Library:

If this library card could speak to students today, it would say:

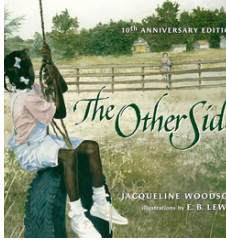


ACCESS FOR EVERYONE

How can libraries continue opening doors for people in your community?

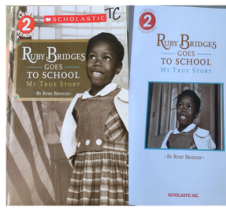
FIFTH GRADE RESOURCES

Books



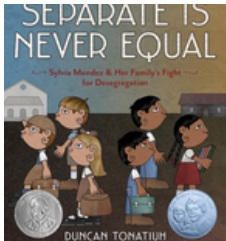
"The Other Side" by Jacqueline Woodson

Tells the story of two girls who form a friendship across a segregated community, showing how kindness and connection can help overcome barriers and bring people together.



"Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story" by Ruby Bridges

Shares the true story of Ruby Bridges, whose bravery helped desegregate schools, teaching young readers about courage, fairness, and making a difference.



"Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation" by Duncan Tonatiuh

Tells the true story of Sylvia Mendez and her family's fight to end school segregation in California, highlighting the importance of fairness, equality, and standing up for change.

Websites

Commonsense.org



free resources for teachers to explore civil rights and social justice

Link: [commonsense.org](https://www.commonsense.org)

Texas Historical Association



Read more about the Colored Carnegie Library with The Texas Historical Association

Link: [Colored Carnegie Library](https://coloredcarnegie.org)

CONNECT WITH US

thehobbycenter.org/education

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**Let us know what you think.
Please take our survey!**



**Post-Show
Student Survey**



**Post-Show
Teacher Survey**