

### ***Bitesized Belonging: Engaging with Months of Celebration and Reflection***

As we enter the first full week of February and Black History Month, many folks who don't identify as Black or African American—and even many that do—may be wondering how they can engage with this, and other, times of celebration and reflection.

First, it's important to understand the history and significance of a month/day of cultural celebration/reflection.

Black History Month is the annual celebration of the achievements of African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. In recent years Black History Month has also served as a time of reflection, mourning, and activism. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of "Negro History Week", the brainchild of Black historian Carter G. Woodson, and other prominent African Americans. Next, consider what this month means to the people within your community or region. How do they celebrate or honor this time?

Did you know that every year there's a new theme? This year's theme is "African Americans and the Arts". During Black History Month, Cengage employees are encouraged to participate in Mosaic ERG events (such as the fiercely anticipated Mosaic Art Auction!), patronize Black owned galleries and art venues, and read literature from Black authors.

Finally, reflect on what this time means to you. Months of celebration/reflection aren't just for the people whose communities they uplift; they're meant for everyone. Whether you belong to a specific community or not, you can use these months as opportunities to self-reflect on your own allyship, self-education, and commitments.

Personally, I love using Black History Month as a time to reconnect with some of my favorite Black authors. Given this year's theme, it seems especially poignant to read some of the amazing work that's entered the markets in the last few years.

### **What authors or artists work speaks to you?**

### **How do you find ways to engage with months of identity emphasis and community?**

I've compiled a small list of just a handful of my favorite Black authors and their impactful work.

### **Science Fiction / Fantasy:**

- "How Long Until Black Future Month?" N.K. Jemisin (anthology),
- "The 5th Season" N.K. Jemisin

### **Fiction:**

- "The Water Dance" Ta-Nehisi Coates,
- "The Nickel Boys" Colson Whitehead,
- "The Underground Railroad" Colson Whitehead

### **Non-Fiction:**

- "Between the World and Me" Ta-Nehisi Coates,
- "The New Jim Crow" Michelle Alexander