

ROOTS

Dear Librarian,

This Memorial Day, a new vision of America's identity, past and present, comes to life when HISTORY® presents a 21st century reimagining of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. Featuring a stellar cast that includes Laurence Fishburne, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Anna Paquin, Anika Noni Rose, Forest Whitaker, and Malachi Kirby as Kunta Kinte, *Roots* will air over four nights, May 30 through June 2, at 9pm ET on HISTORY.

Roots tells the story of one family's journey through American history, from slavery to freedom, and their determination to preserve and pass on their cultural identity. Now informed by new scholarship and retold for a new generation, *Roots* remains an inspirational story of the enduring human spirit.

This viewer's guide, developed by Young Minds Inspired in cooperation with HISTORY, is designed to enrich your library patrons' viewing of this landmark television event. The guide examines key themes of identity, resistance, and resilience from the series, and provides resources to explore the historical background. You can use the viewer's guide as the springboard for a library discussion group or make copies available on your take-one table.

In addition, to build anticipation for *Roots*, we suggest that you:

- Display your library's copies of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley in a prominent location, along with related books on American and family history.
- Encourage patrons to explore their own family histories by creating a gallery where they can display photos of their ancestors.
- Direct patrons to the *Roots* trailer and other resources at www.history.com/roots, and to the excerpt from Alex Haley's classic at www.rootsthebook.com.

Please share these materials with other librarians. Although the materials are copyrighted, you may make copies for your library's use and distribution. And please let us know your opinion of the materials at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-roots-librarians. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired



ROOTS

MAY 30 THROUGH JUNE 2 AT 9PM ET ON HISTORY®

YOUR NAME IS YOUR SHIELD

The epic mini-series *Roots* tells the story of one family's journey from slavery to freedom and their struggle to pass on their cultural identity from one generation to the next. Featuring a stellar cast that includes Laurence Fishburne, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Anna Paquin, Anika Noni Rose, Forest Whitaker, and Malachi Kirby as Kunta Kinte, *Roots* will air over four nights, May 30 through June 2, at 9pm ET on HISTORY®.

This viewer's guide is designed to help enrich your viewing of *Roots* by highlighting key themes and suggesting resources to provide background on the impact of slavery on our national identity.

FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- Throughout *Roots*, Kunta and his family struggle to maintain some sense of identity and connection with their African roots. How did slaves build identities and communities in spite of the violence of the slave system? What does the idea that "your name is your shield," which Kunta and his family pass down through generations, say about the importance of identity?
- Over the course of four nights, viewers will see Kunta and his descendants resist the way they are being treated by the slave owners. In what ways did slaves resist? How did others experiencing oppression throughout history (e.g., the Holocaust and Civil Rights Movement) resist? Why is spiritual resistance (such as singing songs) essential to survival?
- How did slavery shape the history of America?
- There are countless books and films about the history of the slave trade and slavery in the colonies and in antebellum America. Why is it so important to keep telling the story of slavery in America, and what can be learned by doing so?

LEARN MORE

Books

- *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, by Alex Haley
- *Queen: The Story of an American Family*, by Alex Haley
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, by Frederick Douglass
- *My Bondage and My Freedom*, by Frederick Douglass
- *Twelve Years a Slave*, by Solomon Northrop
- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, by Harriet Ann Jacobs
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- *The Slave Trade*, by Hugh Thomas
- *Black Reconstruction in America*, by W.E.B. DuBois

Films

- *Twelve Years a Slave*, 2013
- *Beloved*, 1998
- *Amistad*, 1997
- *Glory*, 1989
- *The Color Purple*, 1985

Websites

- *Roots*, www.history.com/roots
- National Humanities Center, "The Making of African American Identity," nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/enslavement.htm
- Not For Sale, www.notforsalecampaign.org/
- Slavery in America, www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery

