

Black History Month

Black History Month happens every year in October in the UK and in February in America. It is a month when many people can learn more about what happened in the past to black people and what black people have done through history that affects our lives today.

When Did It Start and Why?

It was started in 1926 by an African-American man called Carter G. Woodson, who was a writer and history expert. He is now widely known as 'The Father of Black History' because he started Black History Month. He knew that many history books have been written to only include what white people had done and he wanted people to know what black people had done in history too. Many people believed this was important for black people so they know their own history and it was also important to white people to know that black people had also done some amazing things in the past.

What Happens During Black History Month?

In the UK in October, you might see special programmes or reports about black history and the achievements of black people on the television, radio, within newspapers and on the Internet. You might also see events happening in your local area such as concerts, films or celebrations. At school, you might have special lessons on famous black people or learn more about slavery or black musicians, athletes or actors from the past.



Why Is It Still Important?

Even though a lot has been done to change many attitudes of society, a number of people think that there is still a way to go to change the views of some people. This is getting better, but just think that in the UK, we have still never had a black prime minister. Also, in the 2016 Rio Olympics, black athletes were still making history with people like Simone Manuel becoming the first ever female black swimmer to win a gold medal. And just how many black super heroes can you name – are things really equal?

Black History Month Facts:

- America chose February to have Black History Month because this was the birthday month of President Abraham Lincoln and also Frederick Douglass as many people believe they did important things for black people in America.
- Barack Obama was America's first black president.
- Britain banned slavery in 1833 and Mauritania in Africa was the last country to ban slavery in 1981.
- Unlike what you see in films, a quarter of cowboys were black.
- Hattie McDaniel was the first black woman to win an Oscar (in 1940) but she wasn't even allowed to go to the film premiere of her film, *Gone with the Wind*, because she was black.
- British black comedian Lenny Henry was a huge influence in promoting comedy by black comedians – something that was unheard of before him.
- Lewis Hamilton, a British black Formula One driver, is the most successful British F1 driver in history.



Black History Month Questions

1. In what month does Black History Month happen in America?

2. What did Carter G. Woodson do?

3. In the third paragraph the author has used the word **famous**, write a synonym for this word.

4. In what year did Britain ban slavery?

5. Find **three** conjunctions in the text.

6. Find the name of the first black American president.

7. Why is Simone Manuel famous?

8. What was Hattie McDaniel the first black woman to do?

9. Write down **one** fact from the text that you have learnt

10. Has anything in this fact file made you think? If so, explain your thoughts.
