

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## EDUCATIONAL LESSON



**February is Black History Month**, a time to recognize and celebrate the achievements of black individuals and communities. One powerful way to learn about black history is through writings by and about African-Americans.

### Black Writers

Several award-winning black authors hail from Oklahoma. Ponca City native Joyce Carol Thomas has written more than 50 children's books. She grew up in Oklahoma during the 1940s. Ralph Ellison, born in Oklahoma City in 1913 and pictured above, wrote the famous "Invisible Man." His novel portrays the struggles of black life in the early 20th century.

### Activities

1. Select a poem, short story or novel to read by a black author about black life. Discuss or write what you learned from the work. How do you think the author's life experiences shaped the emotions portrayed in it?
2. Many black authors wrote about black life because it was an important issue to them. Think about an issue that is important to you. Write a poem or short story about it, or a thesis statement for a longer novel.

### Recording History

Many writings by non-blacks also are important to black history. *The Oklahoman* and its Archives help by providing a window into the past. For example, this newspaper's first story about the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision carried the headline "Southern Senators Fear School Ruling."

### Activities

1. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter during the civil rights era. Write down 10 questions you would ask at either the Oklahoma City Katz sit-in or the Tulsa race riots. Then get your answers by researching the events in *The Oklahoman* Archives.
2. Look for stories in this week's *Oklahoman* about black business professionals, politicians, athletes and social advocates. Write an editorial about what life would be like without their contributions.

## Attention teachers!

For more newspaper-based resources on Black History Month, visit <http://nie.newsok.com/programs> and <http://www.nieteacher.org/oknie>.

For help using your school's free access to *The Oklahoman* and its Archives, visit <http://nie.newsok.com> or call (405) 475-3606.

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