



A STORY OF BONES

DELVE DEEPER READING LIST



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Susan Conlon, MLIS and Kim Dorman, Community Engagement Coordinator, of Princeton Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary A Story of Bones.

It tells the story of Annina van Neel's as she works to reclaim and honor the neglected history of St. Helena after the remains of thousands of formerly enslaved Africans are uncovered on the remote island.

Contributors



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ADULT NON-FICTION

Benjamin, Kathy. *Texas Mass Graves: Burial grounds of atrocity, massacre, and battle*. Charleston, SC.: Arcadia Publishing, 2022.

Every mass grave in Texas offers morbid proof that at one time, in that place, something went very, very wrong. Texans have resorted to mass graves out of necessity, desperation, and appalling indifference. These sites mark natural disasters or hide unnatural crimes that tested the limits of human endurance and empathy. Because of this, memorializing those who lie in mass graves can be controversial. Not everyone wants to dig up the darkness of the past, much less admit that the dirt is still fresh. Nevertheless to honor those whose bones lie mixed with others, their stories must be told. In so doing, Kathy Benjamin exhumes essential shards of Lone Star history, from the Alamo to the present day.

Bernier, Celeste-Marie and Hannah Durkin, editors. *Visualizing Slavery: Art across the African Diaspora*. Liverpool, U.K.: Liverpool University Press, 2016.

The purpose of this book is to excavate and recover a wealth of under-examined artworks and research materials directly to interrogate, debate and analyze the tangled skeins undergirding visual representations of transatlantic slavery across the Black diaspora.

Eltis, David; Richardson, David. *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. London, England: Yale University Press, 2015.

Between 1501 and 1867, the transatlantic slave trade claimed an estimated 12.5 million Africans and involved almost every country with an Atlantic coastline. In this extraordinary book, two leading historians have created the first comprehensive, up-to-date atlas on this 350-year history of kidnapping and coercion. It features nearly 200 maps, especially created for the volume, that explore every detail of the African slave traffic to the New World. The atlas is based on an online database (www.slavevoyages.org) with records on nearly 35,000 slaving voyages—roughly 80 percent of all such voyages ever made.

Using maps, David Eltis and David Richardson show which nations participated in the slave trade, where the ships involved were outfitted, where the captives boarded ship, and where they were landed in the Americas, as well as the experience of the transatlantic voyage and the geographic dimensions of the eventual abolition of the traffic. Accompanying the maps are illustrations and contemporary literary selections, including poems, letters, and diary entries, intended to enhance readers' understanding of the human story underlying the trade from its inception to its end.

Frohne, Andrea E. *The African Burial Ground in New York City: Memory, Spirituality, and Space*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015.

In 1991, archaeologists in lower Manhattan unearthed a stunning discovery that buried for more than 200 years was a communal cemetery containing the remains of up to 20,000 people. At roughly 6.6 acres, the African Burial Ground is the largest and earliest known burial space of African descendants in North America. Capturing the varied perspectives and the emotional tenor of the time, Frohne narrates the story of the African Burial Ground and the controversies surrounding urban commemoration. She analyzes both its colonial and contemporary representations, tracing the history and identity of the area from a forgotten site to a contested and negotiated space.

Hansen, Joyce. *Breaking Ground, Breaking Silence: The Story of New York's African Burial Ground*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co, 1998.

Breaking Ground, Breaking Silence shows how archaeologists and anthropologists have learned to read life stories in shattered bones, tiny beads, and the faint traces left by coffin lids in ancient soil. At the same time, by blending together the insights found buried in the soil and the results of historians.

Holloway, Karla FC. *Passed On: African American mourning stories, a memorial*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

Passed On is a portrait of death and dying in twentieth-century African America. Through poignant reflection and thorough investigation of the myths, rituals, economics, and politics of African American mourning and burial practices, Karla FC Holloway finds that ways of dying are just as much a part of black identity as ways of living. Gracefully interweaving interviews, archival research, and analyses of literature, film, and music, Holloway shows how the vulnerability of African Americans to untimely death is inextricably linked to how black culture represents itself and is represented. In the conclusion, which follows a sermon delivered by Maurice O. Wallace at the funeral for the author's son, Bem, Holloway strives to commemorate—through observation, ceremony, and the calling of others to remembrance and celebration.

Jacobovici, Simcha, Kingsley, Sean, and Brenda D. Jones. *Enslaved: The Sunken history of the transatlantic slave trade*. New York, NY: Pegasus Books, 2023.

A narrative of the global and human scope of the transatlantic slave trade. The trade existed for 400 years, during which 12 million people were trafficked, and 2 million would die en route. In these pages we encounter Diving with a Purpose (DWP), as they dive sunken slave ships all around the world. They search for remains and artifacts testifying to the millions of kidnapped Africans that were transported to Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean.

Legacey, Erin-Marie. *Making Space for the Dead: Catacombs, cemeteries, and the reimagining of Paris, 1780-1830*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Making Space for the Dead describes how revolutionaries placed the dead at the center of their republican project of radical reinvention of French society and envisioned a future where graveyards

would do more than safely contain human remains; they would serve to educate and inspire the living. Legacey unearths the unexpectedly lively process by which burial sites were reimagined, built, and used, focusing on three of the most important of these new spaces: the Paris Catacombs, Père Lachaise cemetery, and the short-lived Museum of French Monuments. By situating discussions of death and memory in the nation's broader cultural and political context, as well as highlighting how ordinary Parisians understood and experienced these sites, she shows how the treatment of the dead became central to the reconstruction of Parisian society after the Revolution.

Manigault-Bryant, LeRhonda, S. *Talking to the Dead: Religion, music, and lived memory among Gullah/Geechee women*. Durham, NC:Duke University Press, 2014.

Talking to the Dead is an ethnography of seven Gullah/Geechee women from the South Carolina lowcountry. These women communicate with their ancestors through dreams, prayer, visions, and traditional crafts and customs, such as storytelling, basket making, and ecstatic singing in their churches. Like other gullah/Geechee women of South Carolina and Georgia coasts, these women, through their active communication with the deceased, make choices and receive guidance about how to live out their faith and engage with the living.

McClean, Marva. *From the Middle Passage to Black Lives Matter: Ancestral writing as a pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2019.

In this narrative rooted in autoethnography, the author juxtaposes her personal story with that of international stories of resistance to oppression and calls on educators to include children's personal stories as critical pedagogy to honor their funds of knowledge and foster their historical consciousness.

Pearson, Andrew, Jeffs, Ben, Witkin, Annsofie and Helen MacQuarrie. *Infernal Traffic: Excavation of a liberated African graveyard in Rupert's Valley, Ste. Helena*. CBA Research Report 160) Council for British Archaeology, 2011.

This book, published by the British Archaeological Society presents their perspective of the 'liberated Africans' burial ground and the findings of the archaeological and osteological studies done during the excavation.

Rainville, Lynn. *Hidden History: African Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016.

In *Hidden History*, Lynn Rainville travels through the forgotten African American cemeteries of central Virginia to recover information crucial to the stories of the black families who lived and worked there for over two hundred years. Combining historical, anthropological, and archaeological perspectives, she analyzes documents—such as wills, obituaries, and letters—as well as gravestones and graveside offerings. Rainville's findings shed light on family genealogies, the rise and fall of segregation, and attitudes toward religion and death. As many of these cemeteries are either endangered or already

destroyed, the book includes a discussion on the challenges of preservation and how the reader may visit, and help preserve, these valuable cultural assets.

Richardson, David. *Principles and Agents: The British slave trade and its abolition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022.

Parliament's decision in 1807 to outlaw British slaving was a key moment in modern world history. In this magisterial work, historian David Richardson challenges claims that this event was largely due to the actions of particular individuals and emphasizes instead that abolition of the British slave trade relied on the power of ordinary people to change the world.

Rosenblatt, Adam. *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science after Atrocity*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.

The mass graves from our long human history of genocide, massacres, and violent conflict form an underground map of atrocity that stretches across the planet's surface. In the past few decades, due to rapidly developing technologies and a powerful global human rights movement, the scientific study of those graves has become a standard facet of post-conflict international assistance. *Digging for the Disappeared* provides readers with a window into this growing but little-understood form of human rights work, including the dangers and sometimes unexpected complications that arise as evidence is gathered and the dead are named.

Smith, Clint. *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with slavery across America*. New York NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2021.

Beginning in his hometown of New Orleans, Clint Smith leads the reader on an unforgettable tour of monuments and landmarks - those that are honest about the past and those that are not - that offer an intergenerational story of how slavery has been central in shaping America's collective history. Informed by scholarship and brought to life by the story of people living today, Smith's debut work of nonfiction is a landmark of reflection and insight that offers a new understanding of the hopeful role that memory and history can play in making sense of the United States and how it has come to be.

Smith, Elle, and Melanie Klinkner, editors. *Mass Graves, Truth and Justice: Interdisciplinary perspectives on the investigation of mass graves*. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023.

Across the world, mass graves often containing a multitude of human remains are the sites of human loss, suffering, and unimaginable acts of cruelty. While no one mass grave or its investigation is the same, all mass graves contain evidence that is essential to the realization of justice and accountability goals for victims, affected communities, states in transition, and the international community.

Turner, Grace. *Honoring Ancestors in Sacred Space: The Archaeology of an eighteenth century African Bahamian cemetery*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2017.

The Anglican Church established St. Matthew's Parish on the eastern side of Nassau to accommodate a population increase after British Loyalists migrated to the Bahamas in the 1780s. The parish had three separate cemeteries: the churchyard cemetery and Centre Burial Ground were for whites, but the Northern Burial Ground was officially consecrated for nonwhites in 1826 by the Bishop of Jamaica. In *Honoring Ancestors in Sacred Space*, Grace Turner posits that the African-Bahamian community intentionally established this separate cemetery in order to observe non-European burial customs. Analyzing the landscape and artifacts found at the site, Turner shows how the community used this space to maintain a sense of social and cultural belonging despite the power of white planters and the colonial government. Although the Northern Burial Ground was covered by storm surges in the 1920s, and later a sidewalk was built through the site, Turner's fieldwork reveals a wealth of material culture. She points to the cemetery's location near water, trees planted at the heads of graves, personal items left with the dead, and remnants of food offerings as evidence of mortuary practices originating in West and Central Africa. According to Turner, these African-influenced ways of memorializing the dead illustrate W. E. B. Du Bois's idea of "double consciousness"--the experience of existing in two irreconcilable cultures at the same time. Comparing the burial ground with others in Great Britain and the American colonies, Turner demonstrates how Africans in the Atlantic diaspora did not always adopt European customs but often created a separate, parallel world for themselves.

ADULT FICTION

Black, Daniel. *Don't Cry for Me*. New York, NY: Hanover Square Press, 2023.

As Jacob lies dying, he begins to write a letter to his only son, Isaac. They have not met or spoken in many years, and there are things that Isaac must know. Stories about his ancestral legacy in rural Arkansas that extend back to slavery. Secrets from Jacob's tumultuous relationship with Isaac's mother and the shame he carries from the dissolution of their family. Tragedies that informed Jacob's role as a father and his reaction to Isaac's being gay. But most of all, Jacob must share with Isaac the unspoken truths that reside in his heart. He must give voice to the trauma that Isaac has inherited. And he must create a space for the two to find peace.

Conklin, Tara. *The House Girl: A Novel*. New York, NY: William Morrow, 2013.

Lina Sparrow is an ambitious young lawyer working on a historic class-action lawsuit seeking reparations for the descendants of American slaves. 1852: Josephine is a seventeen-year-old house slave who tends to the mistress of a Virginia tobacco farm—an aspiring artist named Lu Anne Bell. Alternating between antebellum Virginia and modern-day New York, this searing tale of art and history, love and secrets explores what it means to repair a wrong, and asks whether truth can be more important than justice.

Dlop, David. *At Night all Blood is Black*. New York, NY: Picador Paper, 2021.

Alfa Ndiaye is a Senegalese man who, never before having left his village, finds himself fighting as a so-called “Chocolat” soldier with the French army during World War I. When his friend Mademba Diop, in the same regiment, is seriously injured in battle, Diop begs Alfa to kill him and spare him the pain of a long and agonizing death in No Man’s Land. Unable to commit this mercy killing, madness creeps into Alfa’s mind as he comes to see this refusal as a cruel moment of cowardice.

Harris, Nathan. *The Sweetness of Water*. New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2022.

In the waning days of the Civil War, brothers Prentiss and Landry—freed by the Emancipation Proclamation—seek refuge on the homestead of George Walker and his wife, Isabelle. The Walkers, wracked by the loss of their only son to the war, hire the brothers to work their farm, hoping through an unexpected friendship to stanch their grief. Parallel to their story runs a forbidden romance between two Confederate soldiers. With candor and sympathy, Harris creates a cast of characters, depicting Georgia in the violent crucible of Reconstruction.

Locke, Attica. *The Cutting Season*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2012.

The Cutting Season is a thriller that interweaves two murder mysteries, one on Belle Vie, a historic landmark in the middle of Louisiana's Sugar Cane Country, and one involving a slave gone missing more than one hundred years earlier.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved: A Novel*. New York, NY: Vintage Reprint, 2004.

Sethe was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. Sethe has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved.

Tahir, Sabaa. *All My Rage*. New York, NY: Razorbill, 2023.

In Lahore, Pakistan, Misbah married and after their young life is shaken by tragedy, they come to the United States to open the Clouds Rest Inn Motel hoping for a new start. Their son, Sal, scrambles to run the family motel as his mother Misbah's health fails and his grieving father loses himself to alcoholism. When Sal's attempts to save the motel spiral out of control, he and Noor must ask themselves what friendship is worth—and what it takes to defeat the monsters in their pasts and the ones in their midst.

Ward, Jesmyn. *Salvage the Bones*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury (Reprint), 2012.

A hurricane is building over the Gulf of Mexico, threatening the coastal town of Bois Sauvage, Mississippi. As the twelve days that make up the novel's framework yield to their dramatic conclusion, this unforgettable family – motherless children sacrificing for one another as they can, protecting and nurturing where love is scarce – pulls itself up to face another day. A novel about familial love and community against all odds, and a wrenching look at the lonesome, brutal and restrictive realities of rural poverty.

YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION

Arabindan-Kesson, Anna. *Black Bodies, White Gold: Art, cotton, and commerce in the Atlantic world*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021.

Using cotton—a commodity central to the slave trade and colonialism—as a paradigm, *Black Bodies, White Gold* presents new interpretations of the way art, commerce, and colonialism were intertwined in the nineteenth century Atlantic world.

Davis, Kenneth C. *In the Shadow of Liberty: The Hidden history of slavery, four presidents, and five black lives*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2016.

The book sheds light on an often-overlooked part of our nation's history in this biography of five enslaved individuals - Billy Lee, Ona Judge, Isaac Granger, Paul Jennings, and Alfred Jackson - and the U.S. Presidents who owned them.

Shea, Therese. *The African Burial Ground*. Gareth Stevens Publishing, New York, 2017.

In 1991, preparation for the construction of a new federal office building led to a startling discovery: a skeleton. Further excavation exposed the bones of 420 men, women, and children. This area of New York had been a burial ground set aside for both free and enslaved Africans during the 1600s and 1700s. It's thought to be one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Everett, Sara. *How To Live Without You*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2022.

In this coming-of-age story about family, grief, and second chances, seventeen-year-old Emmy returns home for the summer to uncover the truth behind her sister Rose's disappearance—only to learn that Rose had many secrets, ones that have Emmy questioning herself and the sister Emmy thought she knew.

Fadugba, Femi. *The Upper World*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2023.

During arguably the worst week of Esso's life, an accident knocks him into an incredible world—a place beyond space or time, where he can see glimpses of the past and future. But if what he sees there is true, he might not have much longer to live, unless he can use his new gift to change the course of history.

Hammonds, Jas. *We Deserve Monuments*. New York, NY: Roaring Brook Press, 2022.

Family secrets, a swoon-worthy romance, and a slow-burn mystery collide in *We Deserve Monuments*, a YA debut from Jas Hammonds that explores how racial violence can ripple down through generations.

Latham, Jennifer. *Dreamland Burning*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2017.

When Rowan finds a skeleton on her family's property, investigating the brutal, century-old murder leads to painful discoveries about the past. Alternating chapters tell the story of William, another teen grappling with the racial firestorm leading up to the 1921 Tulsa race riot, providing some clues to the mystery.

Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House LLC, 2011.

Sunny Nwazue lives in Nigeria, but she was born in New York City. Her features are West African, but she's albino. She's a terrific athlete, but can't go out into the sun to play soccer. There seems to be no place where she fits in. And then she discovers something amazing—she is a “free agent” with latent magical power. And she has a lot of catching up to do.

Reynolds, Jason. *Boy in the Black Suit*. New York, NY: Atheneum, 2015.

A job at a funeral home helps seventeen year old Matt come to terms with his own grief and struggles.

BOOKS FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS AND CHILDREN

Alexander, Kwame. *The Door of No Return*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, Hachette Book Group, 2022.

From the Newbery Medal and Coretta Scott King Award winning author Kwame Alexander, comes the first book in a searing, breathtaking trilogy that tells the story of a boy, a village, and the epic odyssey of an African family.

Baumann, Susan K. *The Middle Passage and the Revolt on the Amistad*. New York, NY: Power Kids Press, 2014.

The transport of Africans across the Middle Passage to be sold as slaves is a shameful and unsettling piece of history. The story of the revolt on the Amistad is truly an inspirational one, and its presentation in the graphical format will attract reluctant readers. Includes a timeline and character key.

Huey, Lois Miner. *Forgotten Bones: Uncovering a slave cemetery*. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press, 2016.

Imagine you're watching a backhoe dig up the ground for a construction project when a round object rolls down a pile of dirt and stops at your feet. You pick it up, brush off some dirt, and realize you're holding a skull! This is exactly what happened in Albany, New York, in 2005. Workers were putting in a new sewer line when a backhoe driver dug up a skull. After police declared the skull wasn't connected to any recent crimes, a team of archaeologists took a closer look. They determined the skull was from an African American who had died more than one hundred years earlier. Suddenly the construction site turned into an archaeological dig. Scientists excavated more bones and realized that they had located a long-lost slave cemetery. Slavery had been legal in the northern United States, including in New York State, in colonial times, but the stories of these slaves are largely unknown. This site became just the third slave cemetery ever to be excavated in the North. See how archaeologists pieced together the truth about these once forgotten bones.

Jeffers, Oliver. *The Heart and the Bottle*. New York, NY: Philomel Books, 2010.

After safeguarding her heart in a bottle hung around her neck, a girl finds the bottle growing heavier and her interest in things around her becoming smaller.

Meng, CeCe. *Always Remember*. New York, NY: Philomel Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2016.

After Old Turtle swims his last swim and breathes his last breath, and the waves gently take him away, his friends lovingly remember how he impacted each and every one of them. As the sea animals think back on how much better Old Turtle made their lives and their world, they realize that he is not truly gone, because his memory and legacy will last forever.

Nikila Hannah-Jones. *The 1619 Project: Born on the water*. New York, NY: Penguin/Random House, 2021.

The 1619 Project's lyrical picture book in verse chronicles the consequences of slavery and the history of Black resistance in the United States, thoughtfully rendered by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and Newbery honor-winning author Renée Watson.

A young student receives a family tree assignment in school, but she can only trace back three generations. Grandma gathers the whole family, and the student learns that 400 years ago, in 1619, their ancestors were stolen and brought to America by white slave traders. But before that, they had a home, a land, a language. She learns how the people said to be born on the water survived.

Smith, Elliott (author) and Cicely Lewis (editor). *The Slave Trade: Black lives and the drive for profit*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 2022.

Learn about the Middle Passage and how the slave trade operated and was brought to its end.

Thompson, Holly. *One Wave at a Time: A Story about grief and healing*. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Co., 2018.

After his father dies, Kai experiences all kinds of emotions: sadness, anger, fear, guilt. Sometimes they crash and mix together. Other times, there are no emotions at all—just flatness. As Kai and his family adjust to life without Dad, the waves still roll in. But with the help of friends and one another, they learn to cope—and, eventually, heal.

Westgate, Kathryn. *Uncovering African Burial Grounds*. New York, NY: Enslow Publishing, 2023.

In 1991, while preparing for the construction of a new federal office, crews working in New York City made a startling discovery: a skeleton. Further excavation exposed the bones of more than 400 men, women, and children. Readers of this informative book will explore this area of New York that had been a burial ground set aside for both free and enslaved Africans during the 1600s and 1700s.