

Unsung stories



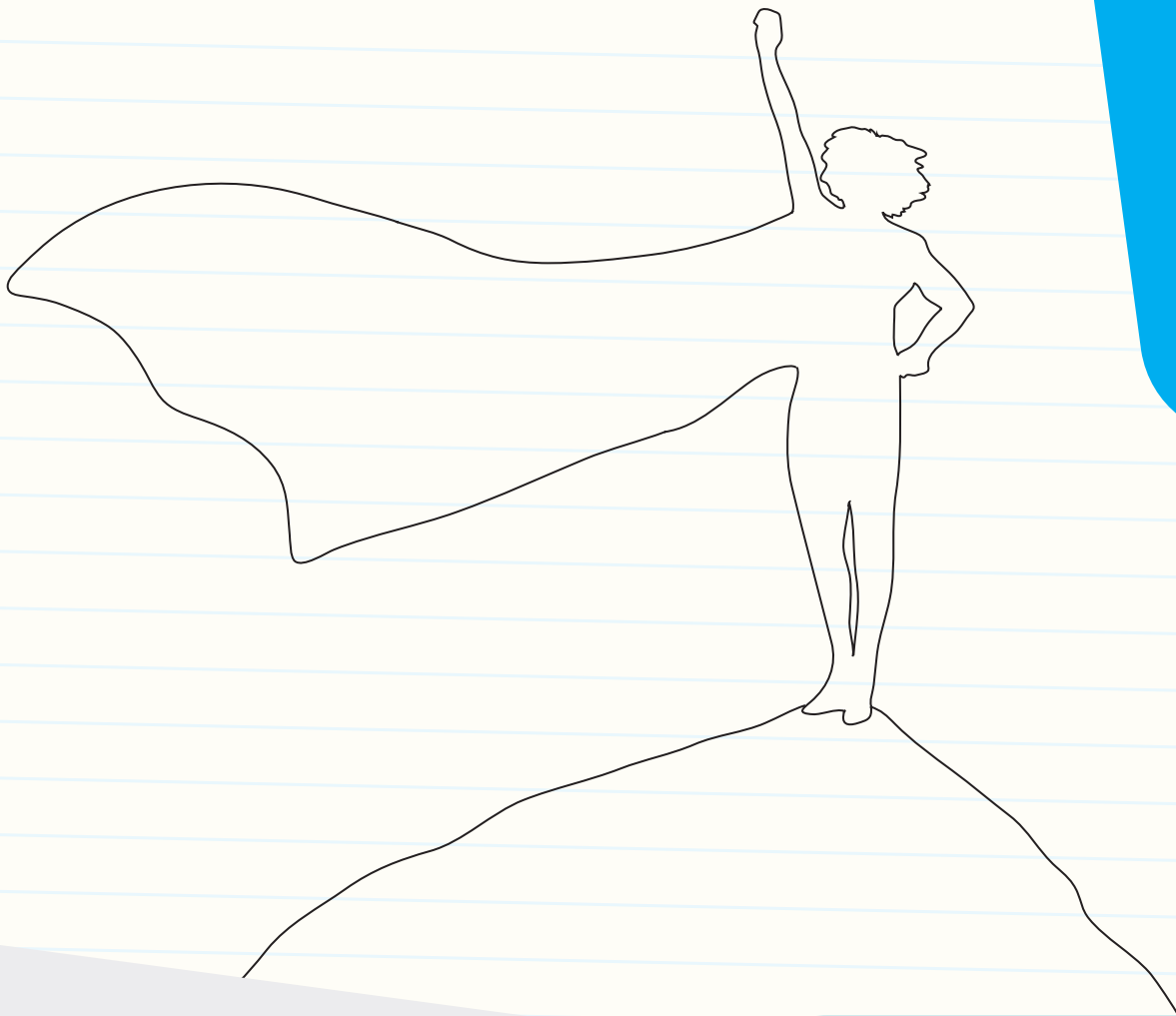
Black History
Month



45 mins



Give it a go



Aim of activity

Let's hear it for the sheroes! Discover the stories of some amazing Black women and become inspired to champion their stories now and into the future.

What you'll get out of it

- Discover the stories of inspirational Black women.
- Find out what Black History Month is and why it's important.
- Create something to celebrate Black History Month for your unit and community.

What you'll need

- Information about your Black shero – see 'Note to leader'
- A square of material – this could be card, fabric – see 'Note to leader'
- A selection of craft materials



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding



Note to leader

Before you run this activity, ask your girls to find out a couple of things about one inspirational Black woman they'd like to chat about at the start of this activity.

You might want to find out more information about Black History Month and Girlguiding's commitment to standing together against racism. We've pulled together lots of resources and links to help you answer any questions you or your girls may have: www.girlguiding.org.uk/talking-race-and-racism.

If completing this activity virtually, you could use painting programmes on your devices to create the individual squares.

Girls should not include full names or identifiable personal details in their designs.

In step 4, you might want to discuss how Black History Month:

- Recognises the contributions Black people have made and make globally.
- Amplifies stories of Black people that have been erased or untold.
- Addresses and allows time for reflection on the impact of racism on Black people.
- Helps to improve everyone's knowledge of Black history globally.

A **shero** is an inspiring woman who's celebrated for her courage and amazing achievements. She's someone who fights for human rights – a true heroine.

What to do

1 Think about the Black shero you've found out about. Everyone say one thing you think is brilliant about the person you've chosen, but don't say their name just yet. Listen to everyone else's points, do you think anyone picked the same person as you? Everyone reveal who you picked. Maybe no one picked the same person as you or several others did. Why do you think that might have happened?

2 Has anyone heard of Connie Mark? If so, share what you know. Choose someone to read her story out loud. You'll find her story at the end of this activity. Jot down any words or phrases that inspire you.

3 Connie spent her life trying to get the unheard and unrecognised stories told. However, Connie's achievements were also overlooked. Chat about what you felt was unfair, and what inspired you about Connie's story.

October is Black History Month in the UK, where people come together to recognise and celebrate the stories of amazing Black people who've shaped the country. These stories may have been forgotten about, never told or erased because of racism. Throughout the month, people take the time to find out stories of Black people who've made a difference to the country, and celebrate culture and history.

4 Why do you think celebrating Black History Month is important?



5 Now, think about all the inspirational Black women you've heard about today. It's time to make sure all their stories are heard. Each choose someone's story you want to find out more about.

6 Take a square of card or fabric and craft materials, or make a square on your device if you're meeting virtually. Use your square to tell your chosen person's story. Include their name and why they inspire you. Everything else is up to you. You could create a collage or cover your square with quotes that inspire you about them.

Whilst designing your square, chat about some of the inspiring Black women that you see in today's media. Perhaps these are athletes, politicians, or activists. Think about where Black people's stories aren't told, on TV or in other media. This is known as **underrepresentation**. What do you think needs to change in society to make sure these stories are told? What could help make sure this change happens?

7 Once you've finished your squares, share your designs. What inspired you about their story and why do you think it's important to celebrate this person? Chat about the barriers you think these women might have faced in being celebrated for their achievements and what you could do now to make sure their stories are heard.

8 As a unit, decide how you're going to use your squares. You could take photos and upload them to create a digital display, send them to each other with notes on the back as inspiration, or upload them to your social media pages and join conversations to celebrate the stories of Black people during Black History Month and beyond.

Try it this way

Why not turn your squares into postcards and send them around your unit, adding your name and another inspirational Black woman to the back of the card? Encourage everyone to research who's on the postcard and find out more about their story.

9 Ask your leader to share what your unit did this year to celebrate Black History Month on social media and inspire other units to take part too.

There are so many stories in history that we should continue to discover and celebrate. It's important to support and champion Black people who are standing up for what they believe in and fighting for fairness and equality.

Take it further

Get involved with Black History Month events that are happening in your local area, and if there isn't one, why not plan one together as a unit?



Connie Mark's story (1923 - 2007)

Connie was born in Jamaica in 1923. During World War II, she became a medical secretary. After the war, she decided to become an activist because of the discrimination she saw and felt during the war. Despite being promoted twice within a year, Connie never received a pay rise or recognition for her work, which she understood was rooted in racism. Her commanding officer put her name forward for a British Empire Medal to recognise her efforts during the war, but this was refused. It wasn't until 1992 (47 years later) that she was finally awarded the medal for her achievements.

After moving to England in the early 1950s, Connie campaigned for the rights of West Indians in London. She campaigned for recognition of Black service personnel who were overlooked for their achievements. She also co-founded the Mary Seacole Memorial Association, which fought for the proper recognition of the work of Mary Seacole during the Crimean War. Mary Seacole was a Black British-Jamaican nurse and businesswoman whose story went unrecognised for 100 years.

In 1989 when preparations were being made to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the war, Connie campaigned for the inclusion of West Indians and women, as their stories weren't being told. She put together an exhibition of photographs collected from service personnel and the archives of the Imperial War Museum for the celebrations.

Every year, Connie took part in Remembrance Day parades to pay tribute to those who served alongside her during the war. She continued to show her support and solidarity until her death in 2007.

In 2018, *The Voice* newspaper listed Connie Mark, alongside many other incredible Black British women, as somebody who's significantly contributed to the development of Britain.