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Books for Deaf History Month

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Stories for readers of all ages featuring deaf characters

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We all know it's important for kids (and adults) to read widely as a tool to learn about and empathize with all kinds of people. Usually, this advice is heard in relation to race ([books to read during Black History Month \(https://www.parentmap.com/article/black-history-best-books-kids\)](https://www.parentmap.com/article/black-history-best-books-kids) are an example) and gender ([books featuring strong female leads \(https://www.parentmap.com/article/brilliant-books-celebrate-womens-history-month\)](https://www.parentmap.com/article/brilliant-books-celebrate-womens-history-month) is another), but diversity is much broader than those two categories.

April is National Deaf History Month, and there is no better time for families to begin learning about deafness. The [Deaf/deaf \(https://www.ai-media.tv/knowledge-hub/insights/difference-deaf-hard-of-hearing/\)](https://www.ai-media.tv/knowledge-hub/insights/difference-deaf-hard-of-hearing/) community has a history of activism against discrimination that has grown into a rich minority culture that is well worth exploring. Your family can start their exploration with this reading list that presents deafness as anything but an impairment.

Picture books featuring deaf characters

“Proud to be Deaf

([https://www.amazon.com/Proud-to-be-Deaf/dp/1526302195?](https://www.amazon.com/Proud-to-be-Deaf/dp/1526302195?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)

ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Ava Beese, Lilli Beese and Nick Beese

This child-led book celebrates Deaf culture and introduces readers to British Sign Language through the real experiences of 7-year-old Ava. Written by Ava with adult help, “Proud to be Deaf” gives hearing readers a glimpse of her daily life, from the universal experience of making friends to the unique way technology helps her navigate the world. She explains common misconceptions about deafness and talks about the achievements of her deaf heroes. Ages 5–7

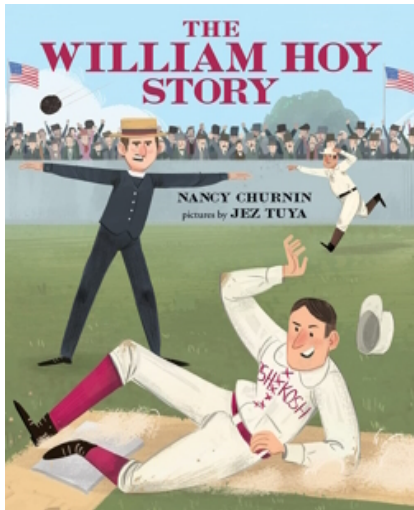


“Proud to be Deaf,” photo credit: Amazon

“Moses Goes... ([https://www.amazon.com/stores/Isaac-Millman/author/B001ITXRFW?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)](https://www.amazon.com/stores/Isaac-Millman/author/B001ITXRFW?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Issac Millman

Isaac Millman has written four books about Moses, a little boy who attends a special school for the deaf. In “Moses Goes to School” readers learn about Moses and his deaf and hard-of-hearing school friends; “Moses Goes to the Circus” follows Moses and his hearing sister to a sensory circus performance; in “Moses Sees a Play,” Moses befriends and learns to communicate with a newly arrived Spanish-speaking immigrant on a field trip; in “Moses Goes to a Concert” he learns how to appreciate music and meets a deaf musician. Each book tells Moses’s story in pictures, written English and in American Sign Language (ASL), with supplementary diagrams to teach some of the signs to ASL learners. Ages 5–8

“The William Hoy Story (<https://www.amazon.com/William-Hoy-Story-Baseball-Changed/dp/0807591920?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” by Nancy Churnin



“The William Hoy Story,” photo credit: Amazon

Young baseball fans will be delighted to learn about the pro ball player who popularized umpires’ use of hand signals. But from the now-appalling nickname “Dummy” to not being able to hear the umpire’s calls, Hoy faced challenges other players didn’t, because he was deaf. Although he didn’t invent the use of hand signals, William Hoy was one of the best and most loved players of his time. When he asked an umpire to use hand signals, he not only made it to base, he changed the way the game was played. Ages 6–10

“Some Kids Are Deaf (<https://www.amazon.com/Some-Kids-Are-Deaf-Understanding/dp/1543510019/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” by Lola Schaefer

This 4-D book using color photos and an included video and app helps very young children understand deafness in simple, neutral terms without value judgements or ableist language. Ages 5–6

“Baby Sign Language Made Easy (<https://www.amazon.com/Baby-Sign-Language-Made-Easy/dp/1641520779/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” by Lane Rebelo

With more than 100 signs, this book provides guidance for getting started learning and teaching your child American Sign Language, capturing your baby’s attention and when to add more signs based on their age and progress. Ages 0–3



“Baby Sign Language Made Easy,” photo credit: Amazon

“American Sign Language for Kids (<https://www.amazon.com/American-Sign-Language-Kids-Communication/dp/1641526017/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” by Rochelle Barlow

You and your child can build your ASL vocabularies with 101 signs chosen for everyday usefulness. Each sign features detailed illustrations, memory tips and hands-on activities. The book includes supplemental guides for parents on special topics like deaf culture and signing for children with autism. Ages 3–8

“Monster Hands (https://www.amazon.com/Monster-Hands-Karen-Kane/dp/0593532295/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Jonaz McMillan and Karen Kane

This book centers around Milo, who is deaf and uses ASL to communicate with his friend, Mel. Milo is afraid there is a monster under his bed, and the illustrations show him signing with his friend as they come up with a plan to scare the monster away. While the written text of the book does not rhyme, the signs the two friends use do, centering the deaf experience in the storytelling. The two authors (McMillan is a Deaf and queer creator and Kane is an ASL teacher) worked together to create a story that deaf and hearing children will enjoy and find authentic, entertaining and relatable. “Monster” will be released on May 7, 2024 (you can pre-order now). Ages 3–7

Middle grade books that tell the stories of deaf characters



“El Deafo

“El Deafo,” photo credit: Amazon

(<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1419712179?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” by Cece Bell

This Newbery medal-winning graphic novel is the go-to book featuring a deaf protagonist. The loosely autobiographical story follows Cece, who transfers to a new school where everyone else can hear. Her giant hearing aid gives her the superpower of hearing the teacher wherever she is in the school building, but it also seems to scare away potential friends. Ages 7–10

“Kami and the Yaks (<https://www.amazon.com/Kami-Yaks-Andrea-Stenn-Stryer/dp/0977896102?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” by Andrea Stenn Stryer

While many books featuring deaf protagonists emphasize their normalness, “Kami and the Yaks” is a real adventure story. Kami is deaf and does not speak, although he can whistle to call his Sherpa family’s yak herd home from grazing. But when the yaks wander off, the family’s livelihood is threatened. Kami sets off on the mountain alone to retrieve the lost herd. He faces a fierce storm before using his heightened sense of observation to finally locate the yaks and bring them home. Ages 5–7

["The Brave Princess and Me \(https://www.amazon.com/Brave-Princess-Me-Kathy-Kacer/dp/1772601020?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)"](https://www.amazon.com/Brave-Princess-Me-Kathy-Kacer/dp/1772601020?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) by Kathy Kacer



"The Brave Princess and Me," photo credit: Amazon

"The Brave Princess" is both a princess story and adventure story. And it's based on the true story of the great-grandmother of Princes William and Harry, Princess Alice of Greece, a real-life hero who risked her life hiding Jews from the Nazis during World War II. The book includes a special nonfiction section with facts and photographs of the real Princess Alice. Ages 9–12

["Turbo Racers](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09NM6S71S?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)

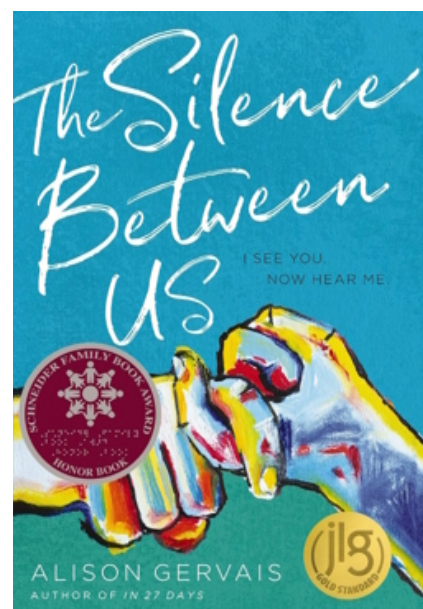
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In the two-book Turbo Racers sci-fi series, the main character, Mace Blazer, is the hearing child of deaf parents. Mace is fluent in sign language as a matter of course while the story focuses on his chance to race in a state-of-the-art vehicle that transforms from race car to jet plane to single-person sub. Ages 9–12

Deaf characters featured in young adult books

["The Silence Between Us \(https://www.amazon.com/Silence-Between-Us-Alison-Gervais-ebook/dp/B07KDZ9W8Y/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20\)"](https://www.amazon.com/Silence-Between-Us-Alison-Gervais-ebook/dp/B07KDZ9W8Y/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20) by Alison Gervais

In this novel about a high school senior who transfers from a Hard of Hearing School to a hearing school in a new state, Deaf teen Maya is a strong female lead who isn't willing to change herself to fit in. The author uses her own experiences as a Hard of Hearing person to present the real-life struggles of high school, heart break and the intersections between hearing and d/Deaf culture.



"The Silence Between Us" photo credit: Amazon

"A Sign of Affection (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08C22Z14Z?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)" by Suu Morishita

One of several recent and ongoing Japanese manga featuring deaf characters, "A Sign of Affection" follows Yuki, a typical college student whose insular world of shopping and socializing starts to widen when she meets Itsuomi, who doesn't speak Yuki's language – sign language. (Manga fans should also read "[Ranking of Kings \(<https://www.amazon.com/Ranking-Kings-Sousuke-Toka-ebook/dp/B09SGM7K81/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>\)](https://www.amazon.com/Ranking-Kings-Sousuke-Toka-ebook/dp/B09SGM7K81/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)," starring the lovable Prince Bojji, whose short stature and deafness defy royal expectations, and "[A Silent Voice \(<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07JKBH9KY?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>\)](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07JKBH9KY?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)," in which a former bully attempts to make up for his cruelty to deaf Shoko years later.)

"American Sign Language for Beginners (<https://www.amazon.com/American-Sign-Language-Beginners-Essentials-ebook/dp/B08BTY6RQ6/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)" by Rochelle Barlow



"American Sign Language for Beginners," photo credit: Amazon

"American Sign Language for Beginners" delivers 30 days of practical lessons that can be completed in half an hour or less. From letters and numbers to essential vocabulary and grammar basics, this beginner's guide provides the essentials needed to develop a solid foundation for American Sign Language in the real world.

"True Biz ([https://www.amazon.com/True-Biz-Novel-Sara-Novicebook/dp/B097B2VLNY/?](https://www.amazon.com/True-Biz-Novel-Sara-Novicebook/dp/B097B2VLNY/?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)

ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)" by Sara Novic

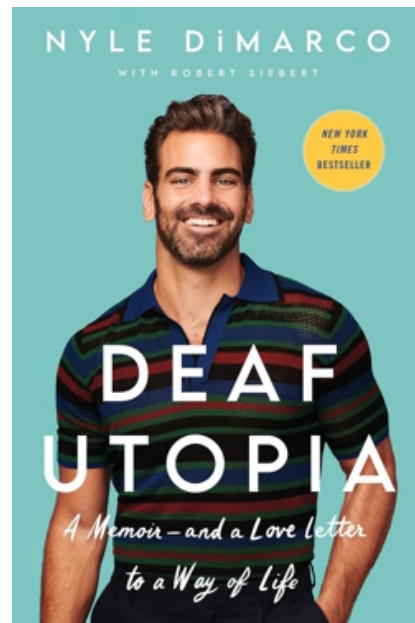
The teens in this story are typical YA heroes, driven to hook up, pass their finals and attain bodily autonomy. But at the River Valley School for the Deaf, the specifics of their challenges all take place in the context of the Deaf community. Their days may involve unfamiliar specifics like sign language and lip-reading or disability and civil rights battles, but their challenges of facing injustice, finding and losing first love and discovering support in community are universal.

“Deaf Utopia (https://www.amazon.com/Deaf-Utopia-Memoir_and-Love-Letter/dp/0063062356?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Nyle DiMarco

For actor, producer, advocate and model Nyle DiMarco, the big New York Italian family, college athletics and reality TV breakthrough are only part of the story. DiMarco is one half of a pair of Deaf twins born to a multi-generational Deaf family in Queens, New York. His memoir opens windows into Deaf culture as he celebrates his first language, ASL and everything else that makes Deaf culture unique.

“Sounds Like Home: Growing up Black and Deaf in the South (<https://www.amazon.com/Sounds-Like-Home-Growing-Black/dp/1563680807?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” by Mary Herring Wright

Too often, when we talk about marginalized communities, we ignore their complexities. Mary Herring Wright’s memoir illuminates the experience of growing up Black, female and deaf in the segregated South before the passage of the ADA. Her personal experiences reveal a lot of history that is overlooked and at risk of being lost, like early Black History celebrations and details about schools for the deaf and blind in the first half of the 20th century.



“Deaf Utopia,” photo credit: Amazon

More reading

These books just scratch the surface of the burgeoning reading options for learning about deafness and Deaf culture. The [British National Deaf Children’s Society](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/parenting-and-family-life/families-magazine/reviews/books/) website has more children’s book suggestions. And for your own reading check out Seattle Public Library’s Deaf Awareness Month [reading list](https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/86922331/1964567272).

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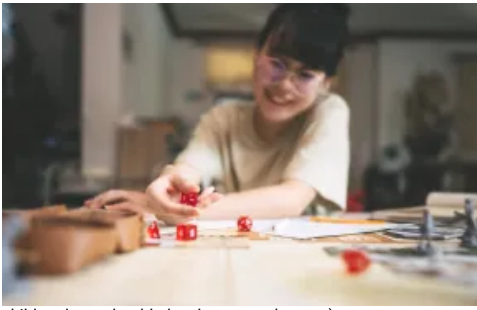
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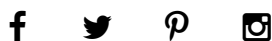
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