

Award-winning poet teams up with Edtech platform to diversify secondary school curriculum

++ Degna Stone has curated a project to celebrate British and Irish authors of African and Caribbean heritage with GCSEPod ++

++North East business aims to shine spotlight on lack of diversity in GCSE curriculum and highlight these authors' work ++

Degna Stone, in collaboration with GCSEPod, has curated a series of audio-video resources, or 'pods', to celebrate British and Irish authors of African and Caribbean heritage shining a light on their lives, influences and works. There are 25 'Pods' in total, which are designed to be freely accessible by teachers, pupils and parents, to contribute to learning in the classroom and at home.

Looking at each author's background, influences and approaches to writing, the pods, which were written by Degna herself, will introduce students to the works of these brilliant writers. Degna researched 100 writers across Britain and Ireland to take into consideration a real range of lived experiences, before refining her shortlist to 25 figures.

These resources will introduce students to authors of African and Caribbean heritage, and their fantastic work. Last year, a study commissioned by education charity Teach First found that pupils may leave education without studying a single piece of literature written by a non-white author. Diversity of thought and experience are crucial components of a well-rounded and inclusive education.

Degna Stone said:

"It's so important to get a real diversity of writers. There's this idea that there's a certain type of Black writer, or Black writing, which illustrates the experience of British and Irish writers of African and Caribbean heritage. I wanted to make sure that, where possible, I had a mix of different people across the UK and Ireland rather than just being London-centric. I was also really keen that we weren't just looking at fiction writers, but that the longer list included poets, playwrights, journalists – all people who are story tellers.

"My experience from doing my own GCSEs was that the focus on Black writing tended to be on African-American writers, rather than on writers of African and Caribbean heritage closer to home. My hope is to encourage teachers and their students to think about who is missing from their reading lists and to seek them out, whether that's Black writers from the UK and Ireland, or other writers marginalised in the curriculum.

"The curriculum is only half the story though – with subjects like English and History you're supposed to read around the subject anyway, so the chance to fill in any holes in the prescribed reading list is already there. Teachers don't need to wait for the curriculum to be decolonised to ensure that when they make recommendations for wider reading, each of their students should see themselves reflected in that list."

Emma Slater, Director of Publishing at GCSEPod, said:

“We know that these pods are by no means an exhaustive or definitive list, but our hope is that they work as a springboard to further exploration. This is only the start of our work to address a lack of diversity, and we have a series of resources planned to further highlight underrepresented groups in the curriculum, including more British and Irish artists of African and Caribbean heritage, Misrepresented Women in History, and the Scientists We Don’t Know. Our aim is to provide students with the opportunity to find out more about the stories they otherwise risk never hearing.”