

# Boosting Teacher Subject Knowledge and Confidence

## *Boys Don't Cry*

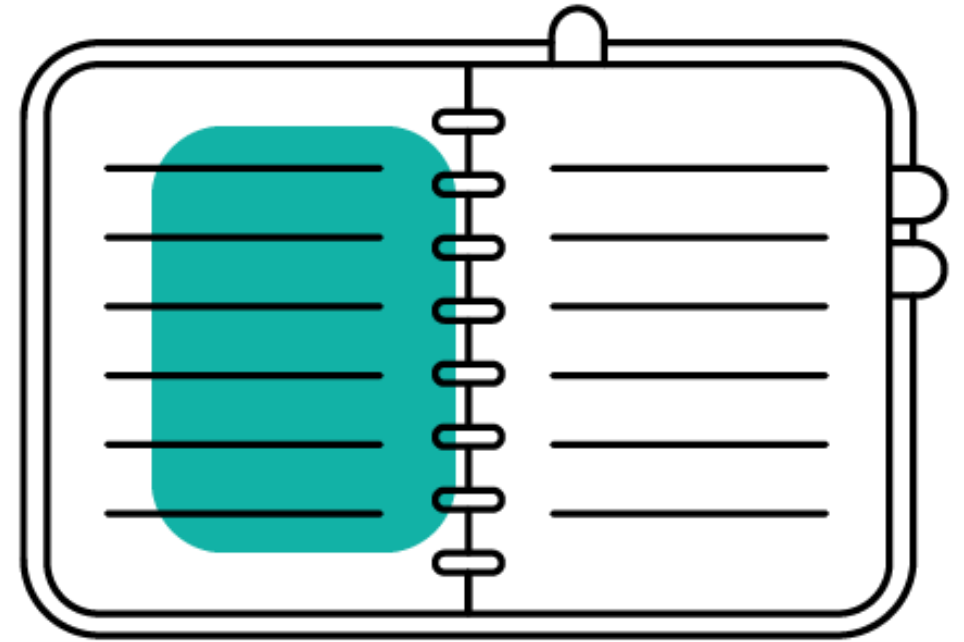
Dr Lesley Nelson-Addy

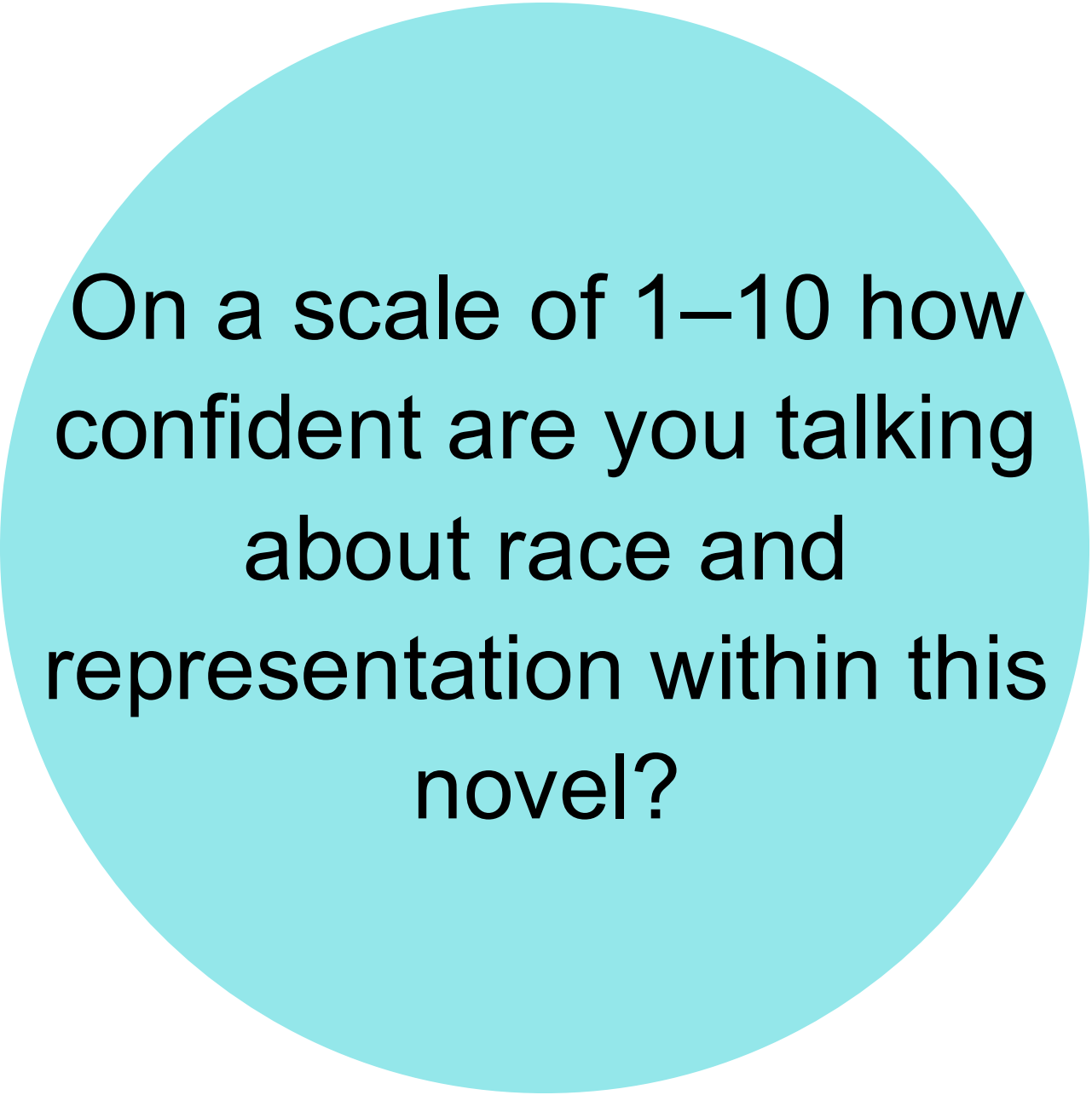


# What we will cover today

In this session we will look at:

- Lit in Colour research findings (2021 & 2024)
- Examination report (2024)
- Concepts: intersectionality, stereotyping, and representation
- Questions

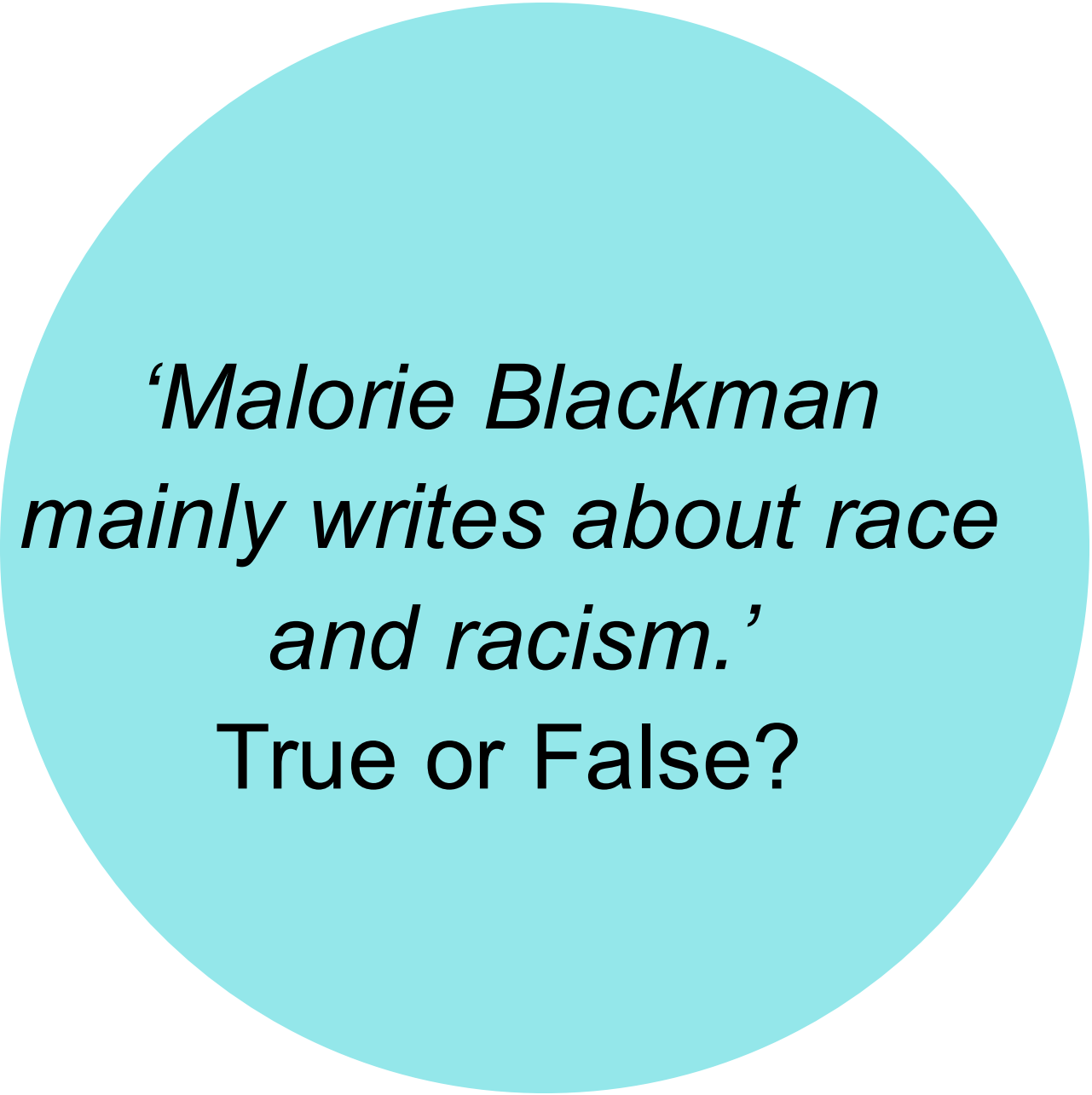


A large, light blue circle is centered on a white background. Inside the circle, the text "On a scale of 1–10 how confident are you talking about race and representation within this novel?" is written in a black, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

On a scale of 1–10 how  
confident are you talking  
about race and  
representation within this  
novel?

# Pearson Edexcel x Lit in Colour

- Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* maintains a strong presence on the KS3 curriculum in schools across England.
- *Boys Don't Cry* the most popular text studied at GCSE – 4.8% of Pearson Edexcel candidates in June 2023.
- 'Teaching needs to plan for explicit engagement with the race aspect of the texts which have been chosen'.
- The 2024 exam questions were related to 'teenage parenthood' and the 'significance of Josh'.



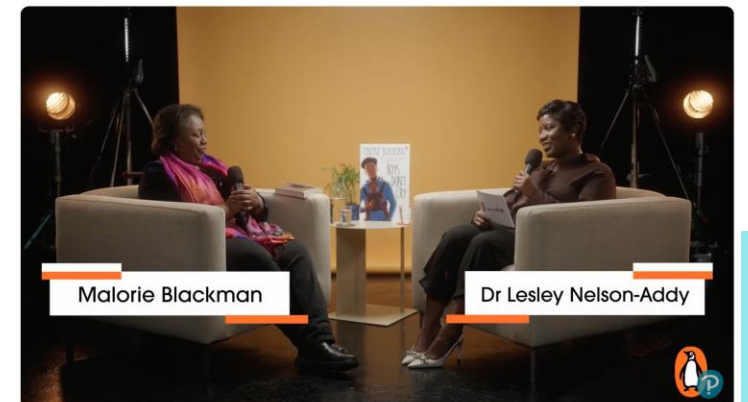
*‘Malorie Blackman  
mainly writes about race  
and racism.’*

True or False?

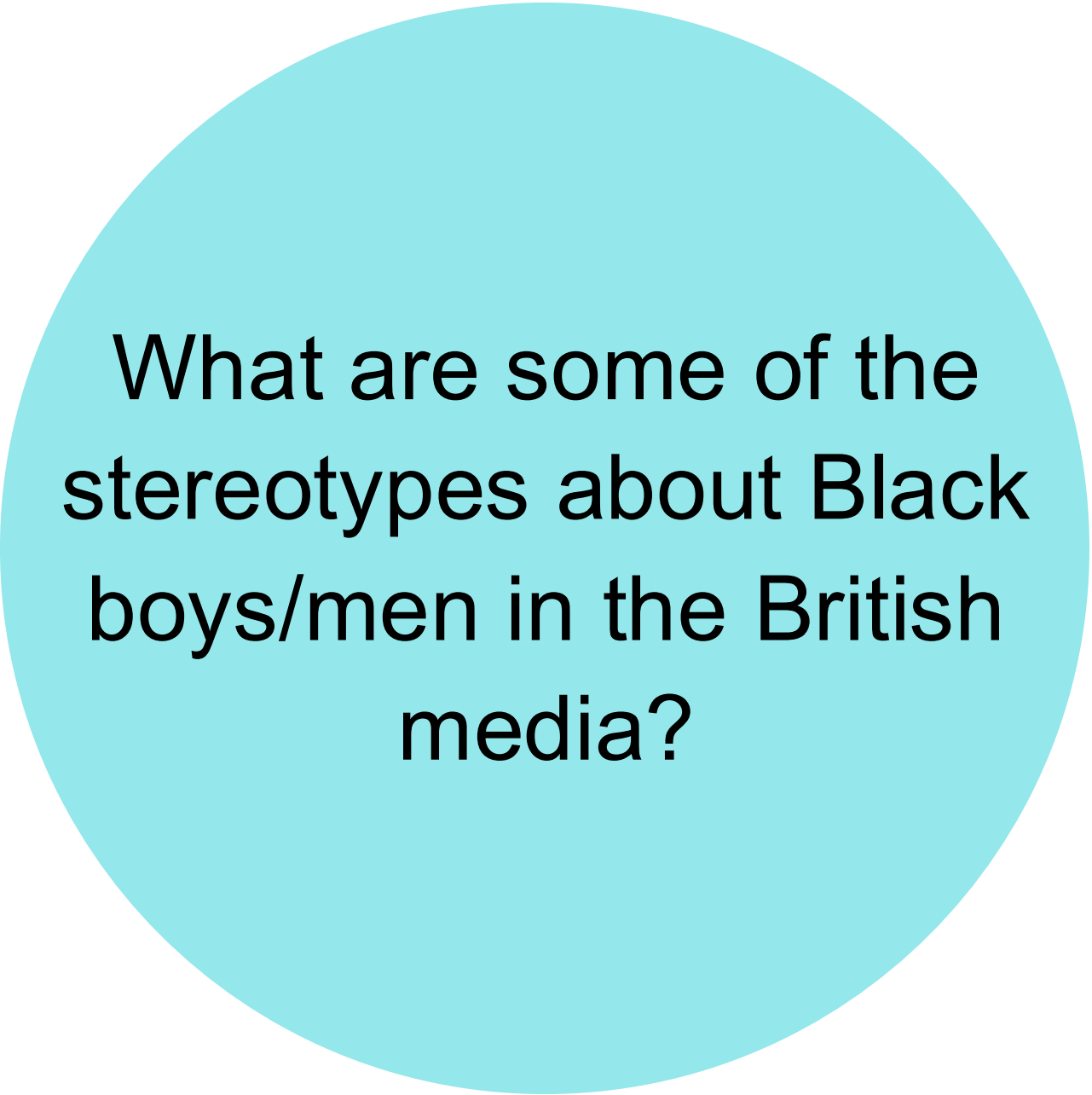
# Exploring Authorial intent – **Adam**

## *Intersectionality*

Intersectionality, coined by Crenshaw (1991), is a concept that invites feminist and anti-racism theorists, seeking social justice, to engage with and expose the hybridity and complexity of identity that influences intragroup differences.



Malorie Blackman on Boys Don't Cry – Lit in Colour Schools Event



What are some of the  
stereotypes about Black  
boys/men in the British  
media?

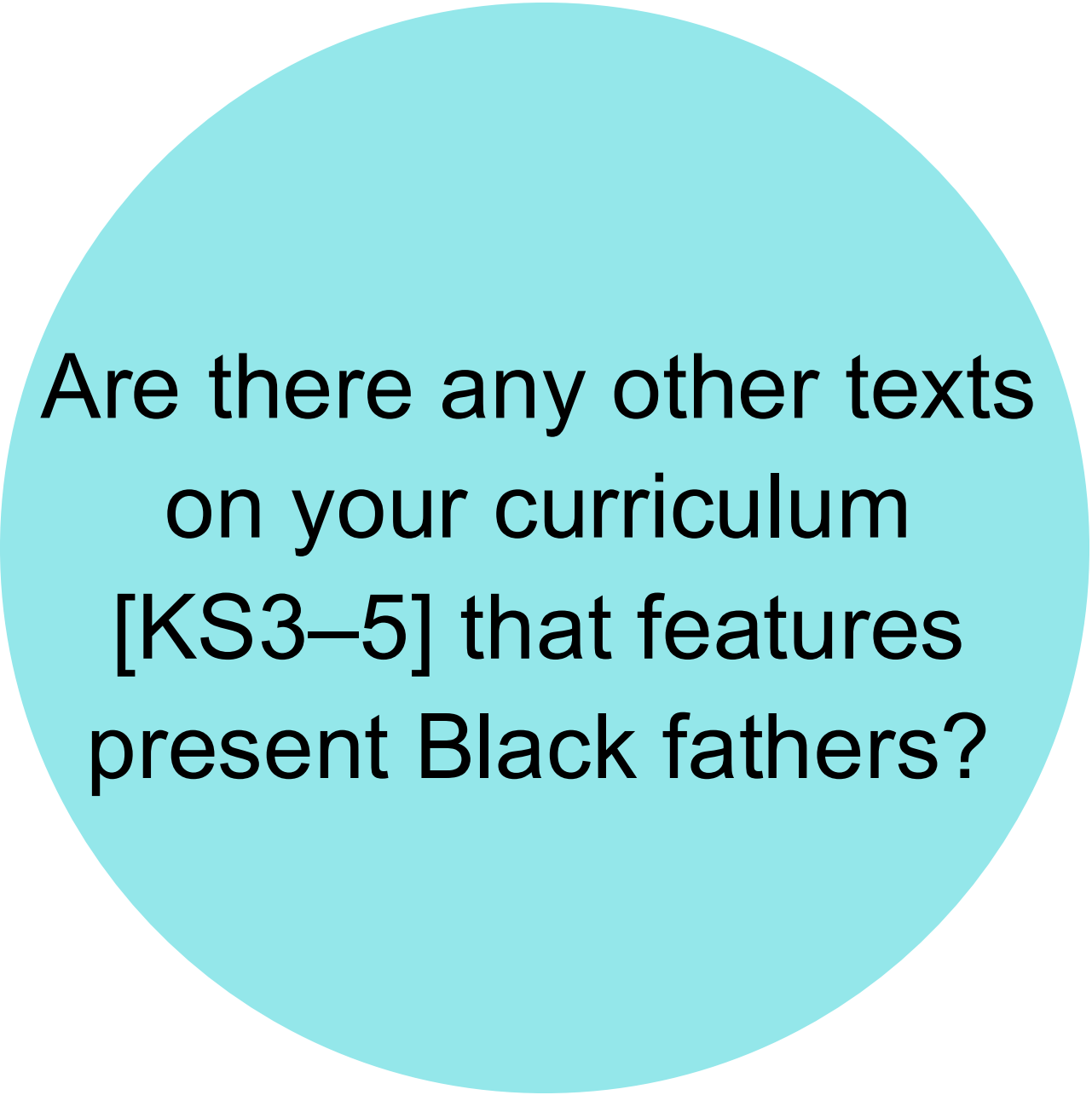
# Challenging stereotypes – **Tyler/Dante**

## **Absent Black fathers**

‘The days when I was home alone with Emma were the most nerve-racking. Dad phoned on the hour every hour to make sure everything was OK. I didn’t know whether I should resent his regular check-ups or be grateful for them. I settled for somewhere in the middle.’

*(Ch. 28, p. 169).*





Are there any other texts  
on your curriculum  
[KS3–5] that features  
present Black fathers?

# Challenging perceptions – Dante

‘The blonde woman who was giving me a hard time pursed her lips and favoured me with one last filthy look before she turned away. Others in the queue ahead of her were regarding me with varying degrees of disapproval. “What?” I asked, spitting out the word with intense resentment.’  
(*Ch. 23, p. 140*)

**That's a lot of Sterling! £180,000-a-week England flop Raheem shows off blinging house he bought for his mum - complete with jewel-encrusted bathroom - hours after flying home in disgrace from Euro 2016**

**NO PLACE LIKE HOME Manchester City starlet Phil Foden buys mum new £2m home aged just 18 after being brought up in modest Stockport suburb**


# Challenging stereotypes – Questions to explore

Some potential questions you could explore with your students:

**In what ways does the character of Dante resist media portrayals of Black teenage boys?** (This could be an extract question that explores the internal battle Dante experiences when trying to defend his brother – Chapter 41).

**Compare the representation of Black male youth in *Boys Don't Cry* to those in the media.** (This could reference newspaper articles of the time, or the popular portrayals and Black boys in British TV and music e.g.: *Top Boy*).

**How does Tyler's portrayal challenge the representation of Black fathers as absent?** (This could be an open question that links Tyler and Dante's portrayal together and invites students to consider the structure of the novel).

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What are some of the  
stereotypes about Black  
girls/women in the British  
media?

# Stereotypes about Black girls and women

The angry/aggressive Black woman or the loud, rude Black girl

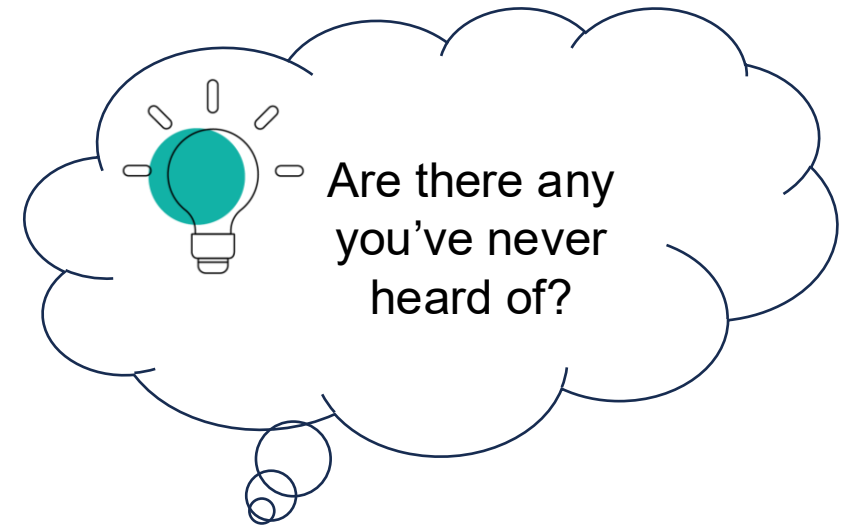
The strong Black woman

The hyper-sexualised Black woman or girl

The invisible or voiceless Black woman

The 'Mammy' caricature

The mature Black girl



# Nuanced representation of Black girls/women

## Melanie

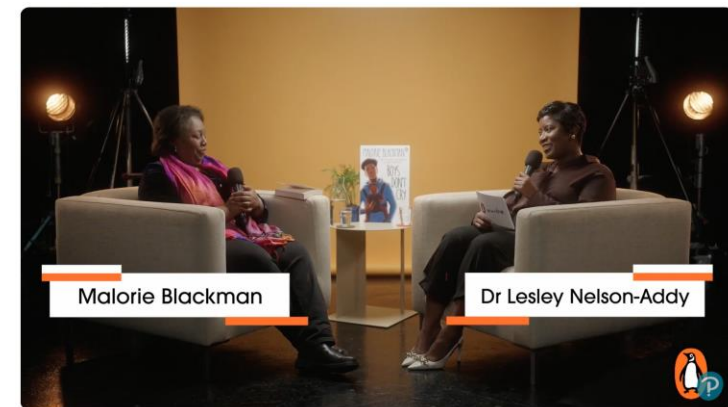
‘I can’t cope, Dante. I’ve tried but I can’t. I need some time to get my head together. So I reckon Emma will be better off with you, as you’re her dad. [...] ‘And you’re her dad,’ Melanie shot back. ‘What do I know about bringing up a kid? It’s not like my dad cared enough about me or my sister to stick around and my mum had to work at two jobs just to put food on the table. I brought myself up, Dante. I don’t know how to bring up anyone else and I... I love Emma too much to ruin her life’

*(Ch. 6, p.31–2)*

## Collette

‘Dante, I like you, I really do, but I’m going to university. I’m going to have a career. I’ve got plans, I was to have a life. All this...’ Colette’s gesture was open-handed, but she might as well have pointed directly at Emma. ‘All this is a bit.. Overwhelming.’ [...] ‘It’s not fair that you should have to give up on all your dreams for something that wasn’t planned or wanted,’ said Collette, anger lending an edge to her voice.

*(Ch. 25, p.148–9)*



Malorie Blackman on Boys Don't Cry – Lit in Colour Schools Event

# Nuanced representation of Black girls/women

## Veronica

‘My point is, she’ll soon be needing her own room,’ said Veronica. ‘I understand from Collette that this is a three-bedroom house. You, and our dad and your brother each have your own bedroom. So where does that leave Emma?’

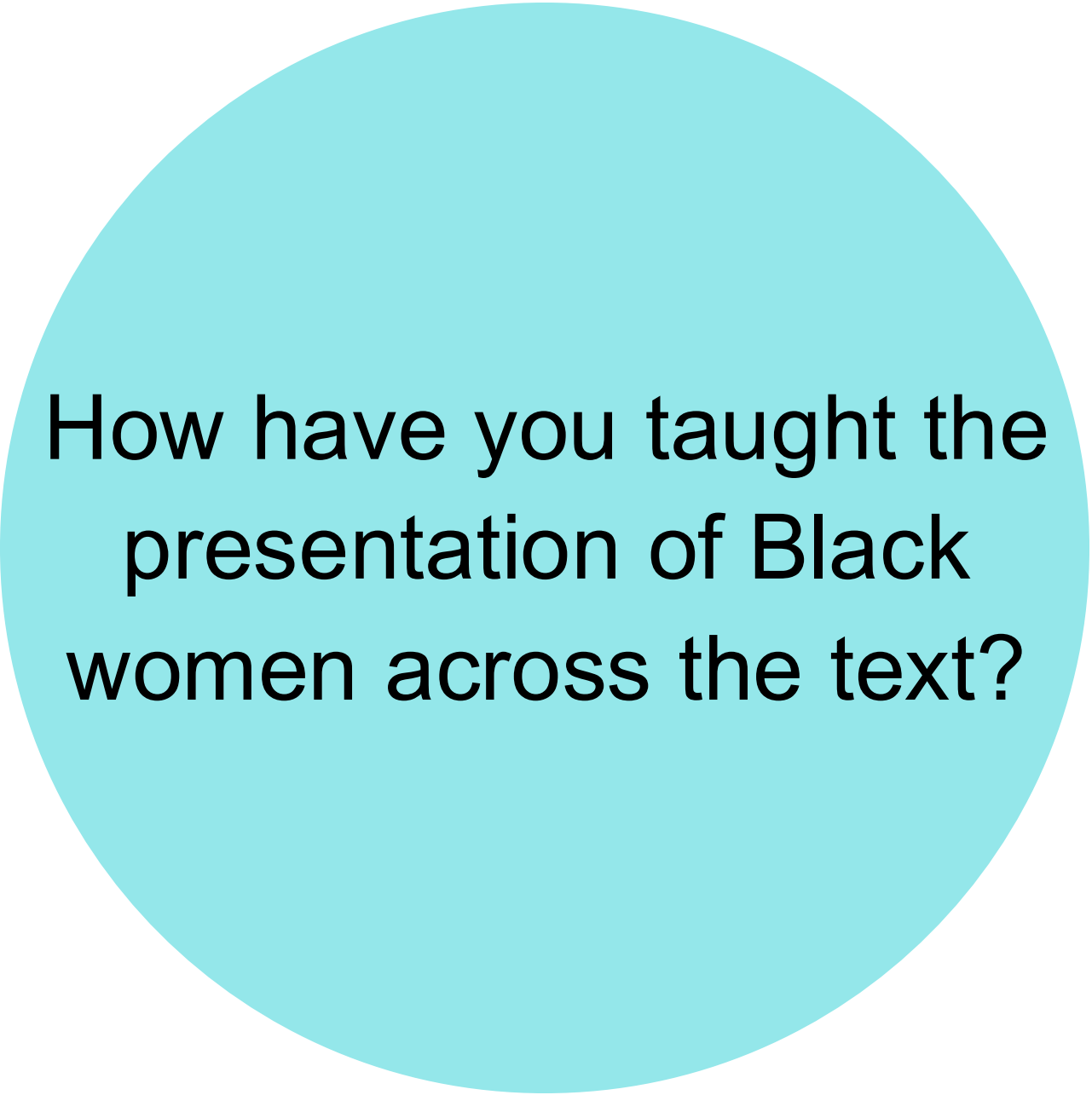
*(Ch. 31, p.191)*

## Aunt Jackie

‘But Jenny knew how much she meant to me.’

‘The way your boys know it?’ asked Aunt Jackie. ‘The way you show Dante you love him every time you put him down or dismiss him? The way you show Adam you love him by not even acknowledging the fact that he’s gay? Is that how your boys know it?’

*(Ch. 38, p.231)*

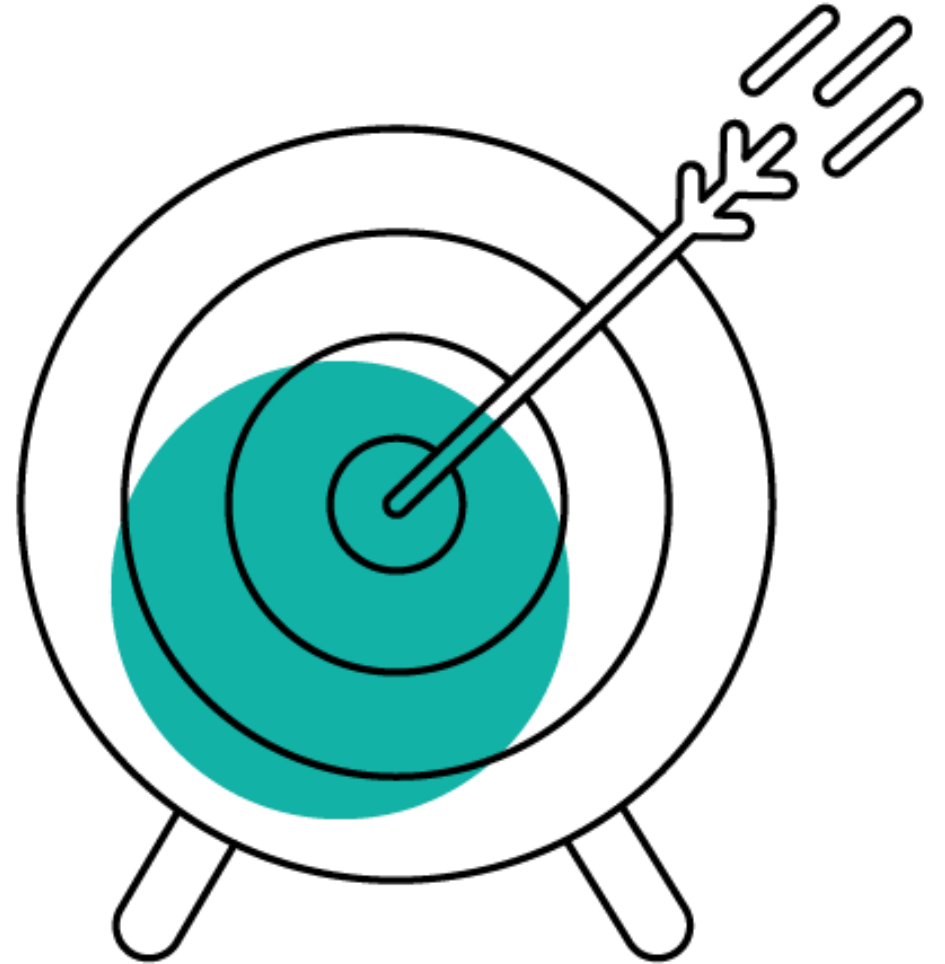
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How have you taught the  
presentation of Black  
women across the text?

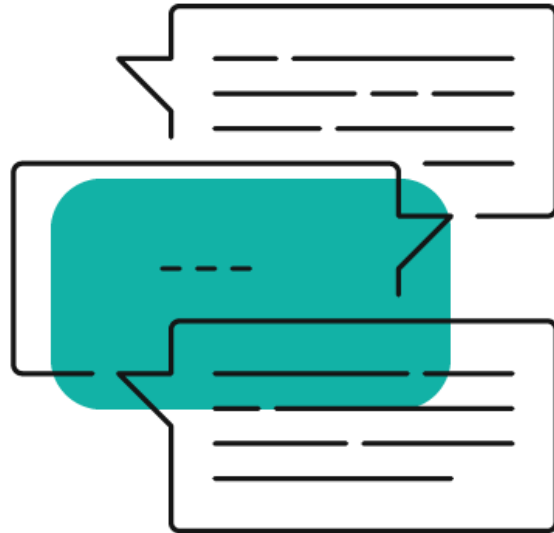


# Discussing race and representation in *Boys Don't Cry*

1. How Blackman explores **intersectionality**
2. How Blackman challenges **stereotypes** about Black boys and men
3. How Blackman offers a layered **representation** of Black girls and women



# Questions



# Pearson Edexcel – We want to hear from you

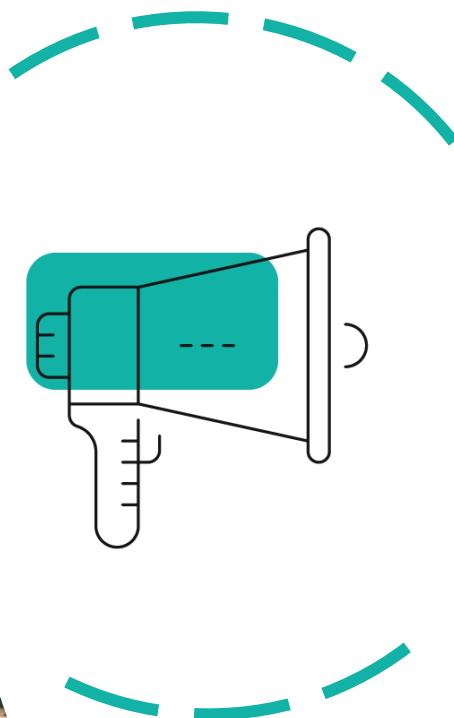
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# Your Feedback Matters

Following this event, you will receive an invitation to share your thoughts about the session. Your feedback is invaluable to us, as it helps us tailor our professional development materials to better meet your needs. Please don't hesitate to let us know what you'd like to see more of and what areas you think could be improved.



Pearson