

# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

## Weekly Newsletter

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- Women's History Month Highlights



## March is Women's History Month!

Commemorating and encouraging the study, observance and celebration of the vital role of women in American history. The purpose of Women's History Month is to increase consciousness and knowledge of women's history: to take one month of the year to remember the contributions of notable and ordinary women, in hopes that the day will soon come when it's impossible to teach or learn history without remembering these contributions.

**This week, we are going to highlight and explore powerful women in literature . . .**

### Join the Conversation at the

## A Conversation: Toni Morrison, Race, Class & Gender

**Thursday, March 5 | 1-2pm | Wellesley Alumni Board Room**

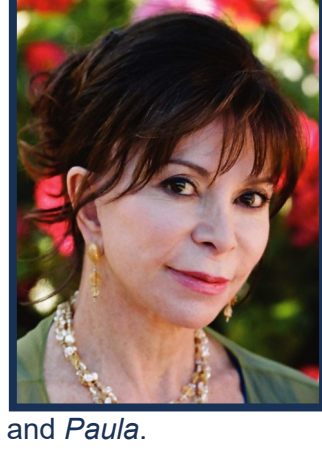
Take a closer look at the lessons we can learn from the ways in which Nobel-prize winning author Toni Morrison wrote and talked about race, class, and gender in the U.S. Students who attend the presentation will be encouraged to engage in discussion and reflection.

Naomi Brown-Jones, MassBay Academic and Transfer Counselor, will lead the discussion.



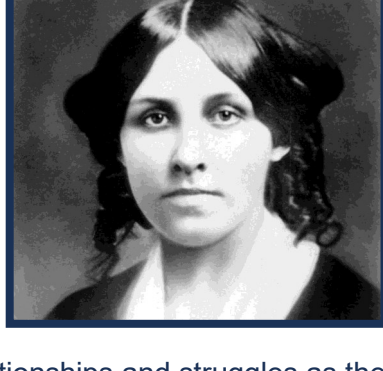
**Toni Morrison** was an African American author best known for her works which commented upon the African American female experience within the United States. She was particularly interested in examining socio-cultural expectations and how those expectations can repress identity. Novels like *Jazz* and *A Mercy* best embody this perspective, with the former highlighting music as an important cultural identity for African Americans and the latter exploring the roots of racism in America's troubled relationship with slavery. Her voice calls forth an appreciation for things seldom recognized. Other titles of Morrison include *Beloved* and *Sula*.

**Audre Lorde** was an African-American author and poet best known for her mastery of visceral expression and turning that expression into a vehicle for activism. Her writing focused on social injustices related to feminism, lesbianism, disability, as well as the African American female experience. Using personal experience and emotion as a form of self-knowledge, her collections of poems (such as *The Black Unicorn* and *The First Cities*) attest to not only the nuance of her own identity but to also challenge the inhibition of stereotype. Other titles of Lorde include *Sister Outsider* and *The Cancer Journals*.



**Isabelle Allende** is a Chilean author best known for her critical interpretation of historical events through a lens of magical realism. Knitting together the mythical and the personal, she writes of strong female protagonists and gives voice to experiences of love, loss, and of social upheaval. Her debut title, *The House of the Spirits*, written first as a letter to her ill grandfather, came as a response to her great-uncle's assassination under the military dictatorship of August Pinochet. To this day, her work seeks to encourage and empower in the face of social displacement. Other titles of Allende include *A Long Petal of the Sea* and *Paula*.

**Louisa May Alcott** was an American author best known for her rigorous involvement in the Women's Suffrage Movement and as the first woman to register to vote in Concord, Massachusetts. In portraying strong female protagonists in her work, she was able to capture a seldom acknowledged perspective - a perspective which saw women not as meek but as nuanced individuals with aspirations, courage, and vigor. Her most popular novel, *Little Women*, helped to capture this sentiment by highlighting the characters' relationships and struggles as they find independence in a world still holding on to gender inequality. Other titles of Alcott include *Under the Lilacs* and *An Old-Fashioned Girl*.



**Jane Austen** was an English author best known for turning the unremarkable into the extraordinary. Her use of literary realism, strong characterization, and engaging storytelling helped to prove that, as one of the first renowned female authors, that women were just as capable as men at constructing literature that leaves a profound impression. Of her works, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* are the two which continue to stand the test of time, portraying relatable, complex, and strong female protagonists. Because she transforms the mundane in her work, she's been able to captivate readers into appreciating the smaller things. Other titles of Austen include *Emma* and *Love and Friendship*.

**Margaret Atwood** is a Canadian author best known for exploring role-reversal and the relationship between women and their society. Many of her works take on a feminist perspective, regarding myth and fairy tales as an important cornerstone to express these often difficult and controversial subjects. *The Handmaid's Tale* perfectly encapsulates this by providing a dystopian setting and examining the power structures which define the world within - power structures which mirror ones of real life. *The Edible Woman* also touches upon power structures, particularly that of the consumerist world we live in. Her work provides a modern cautionary tale of what might happen if our world becomes imbalanced. Other titles of Atwood include *The Testaments* and *Alias Grace*.



**Amy Tan** is a Chinese-American author best known for her exploration of the mother-daughter relationship through the differences of culture and history. Through her use of lyrically crafted storytelling and personal experience as a form of self-knowledge, she examines the way in which cultures can coincide where love and family are concerned. Her most esteemed novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, details her reunion with her long-lost sisters from China, a country she had to leave behind after her mother immigrated to the United States. By turning memory into narrative, she reminds us that

we have no better place to turn than to each other. Other titles of Tan include *Sagwa*, *the Chinese Siamese Cat* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.

**Ijeoma Oluo** is an American author best known for her commentary on the intersections of misogynoir, online harassment, feminism, and social justice. Voted as one of the most influential women in Seattle in 2018, she approaches these intersections by analyzing the rhetoric which perpetuates some of the most concerning aspects of society. *So You Want to Talk About Race* directly engages with this idea, reflecting on the ways in public discourse can be achieved with a level of respect and understanding. Her work establishes an often misunderstood principle: the waypoint of good communication involves listening.



### Other things to keep an eye out for this month in the celebration of women:

- Check out book displays in the libraries throughout the month
- Look for the board on campus that will be recognizing important women in the MassBay Community
- Attend the event:  
**Road to Vote**  
**Wednesday, March 25 | 1-2pm | Wellesley Library Atrium**  
*Celebration of the 100th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote*

