

Take a Behind-the-Scenes Look at Gale's Databases

Professor at Old Dominion University, KaaVonia Hinton, Shares Her Passion for Literature

Gale Literature includes up-to-date biographical information on more than 160,000 authors, spanning from antiquity to present day. Working with Layman Poupard, our trusted publishing partner, enables us to draw on an incomparable network of experts, like KaaVonia Hinton, professor in the Teaching & Learning Department at Old Dominion University.

Our partnership with renowned academics enables us to bring you the most authoritative and trusted databases available to meet the needs and standards of students, faculty, and librarians alike. We spoke with KaaVonia about her background, research interests, and what it's like to bring her passion to a worldwide audience through *Gale Literature*.



KAAVONIA HINTON

BIOGRAPHY:

KaaVonia Hinton is a professor in the Teaching & Learning Department at Old Dominion University. She has written widely about Black women who write for youth in numerous articles and in *Angela Johnson: Poetic Prose* (2006) and *Sharon M. Draper: Embracing Literacy* (2009). She wrote about young adult literature in *Integrating Multicultural Literature in Libraries and Classrooms in Secondary Schools* (with Gail K. Dickinson, 2007) and *Young Adult Literature: Exploration, Evaluation and Appreciation*, 3rd ed. (with Katherine T. Bucher, 2013). She is also coeditor, with Lucy E. Bailey, of the book series *Research in Life Writing and Education* (Information Age Publishing).



“In eighth grade when my teacher taught us Mildred D. Taylor’s *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, I knew I wanted to teach, to write, and to study Black literature.”

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself. Describe what makes your work as a scholar distinctive.

My scholarship focuses on teaching literature for youth, educational biography, literary analysis of young adult literature and texts for children, and teacher leadership. Throughout my career, my research pertaining to literature has focused on one central question: How do we teach literature, particularly young adult literature, in meaningful ways that enhance students’ literacy abilities and interest in reading and writing? I engage in qualitative research, and Black feminism serves as the conceptual framework for much of my work. My primary audience has been classroom teachers. I see collaborating with and speaking to them as essential to learning more about my research questions and to fostering the kind of change I am hoping my work will engender.



“I hope my detailed analyses of authors’ works help teachers, students, and librarians think deeply about aspects of identity, such as race, gender, and class, and how they interlock.”

2. How did you come to be a scholar in your chosen field?

I studied English literature and Black literature at North Carolina A&T State University before receiving my Ph.D. in education, English education, at the Ohio State University, where I took children’s and young adult literature courses. I guess it started before then though; in eighth grade when my teacher taught us Mildred D. Taylor’s *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, I knew I wanted to teach, to write, and to study Black literature.

3. For whom do you design your entries, and why do you target this particular audience?

When I write entries, I imagine preservice and in-service teachers at various stages. Teachers might turn to my entries if they are looking for authors of color to introduce to their students through teaching or inclusion in their classroom libraries. Teachers might turn to my entries for help when preparing a lesson about a particular author’s life and work. Students are often intrigued by authors’ lives in general, their childhoods and their journey to becoming an author. It’s my hope that teachers can use my entries to find information about authors that will motivate students to read their works and become lifelong readers. I hope my detailed analyses of authors’ works help teachers, students, and librarians think deeply about aspects of identity identity, such as race, gender, and class, and how they interlock.

4. Which entry are you most proud of? What makes it stand out?

Although I mostly write about Black women writers, writing about Walter Dean Myers was an honor because of his vast contribution to Black children’s and young adult literature up until his death in 2014. The entry stands out for me because I intentionally tried to convey Myers’s career-long dedication to advocating for Black children’s literacy, for their right to have books that affirm their lives. I wanted to illustrate that his commitment to increasing BIPOC representation in books did not

begin with his 2014 *New York Times* article (“Where Are the People of Color in Children’s WITH Books?”). And I wanted to show how his work over decades remains relevant today, in the midst of the latest book bans and censorship against books by and about BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) and LGBTQ+ people. I wanted my entry to convey that Myers respected the capacity of young readers to make sense of real-world issues around them (like drug use and abuse, abandonment, gang violence, mass incarceration, and poverty), even when those issues are complex and devastating.

5. What are the most important topics you’ve covered? Why are these topics important? Or why are these entries so important?

My entries about Black women writers are the most important topics I’ve covered. These entries introduce readers to such authors as Angela Johnson, Rita Williams-Garcia, Jacqueline Woodson, and Sharon M. Draper. These authors’ texts center on Black youth and their experiences growing up in the United States in rural, urban, and suburban areas—offering varied and rich stories about Black girlhood and boyhood. While Black representation in terms of authorship is increasing, there are still too few Black authors being published, and attention to their work needs to increase. I would like to think that my entries help bring attention to Black children’s and young adult authors and their literature for the benefit of improving literacy in the lives of all children, but especially in the lives of Black youth.

6. What fields of study would you recommend the use of Gale Literature for?

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