



# A Wreath for Emmett Till

*By Marilyn Nelson*

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A Coretta Scott King and Printz honor book now in paperback. A Wreath for Emmett Till is "A moving elegy," says The Bulletin.

In 1955 people all over the United States knew that Emmett Louis Till was a fourteen-year-old African American boy lynched for supposedly whistling at a white woman in Mississippi. The brutality of his murder, the open-casket funeral held by his mother, Mamie Till Mobley, and the acquittal of the men tried for the crime drew wide media attention. In a profound and chilling poem, award-winning poet Marilyn Nelson reminds us of the boy whose fate helped spark the civil rights movement.

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## A Wreath for Emmett Till By Marilyn Nelson Bibliography

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- Brand: Graphia
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## Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

*Starred Review.* Grade 9 Up—This memorial to the lynched teen is in the Homeric tradition of poet-as-historian. It is a heroic crown of sonnets in Petrarchan rhyme scheme and, as such, is quite formal not only in form but in language. There are 15 poems in the cycle, the last line of one being the first line of the next, and each of the first lines makes up the entirety of the 15th. This chosen formality brings distance and reflection to readers, but also calls attention to the horrifically ugly events. The language is highly figurative in one sonnet, cruelly graphic in the next. The illustrations echo the representative nature of the poetry, using images from nature and taking advantage of the emotional quality of color. There is an introduction by the author, a page about Emmett Till, and literary and poetical footnotes to the sonnets. The artist also gives detailed reasoning behind his choices. This underpinning information makes this a full experience, eminently teachable from several aspects, including historical and literary.—*Cris Riedel, Ellis B. Hyde Elementary School, Dansville, NY*

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From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* Gr. 9-12. "I was nine years old when Emmett Till was lynched in 1955. His name and history have been a part of most of my life," writes the creator of award-winning *Carver* (2001) in the introduction to this offering--a searing poetry collection about Till's brutal, racially motivated murder. The poems form a heroic crown of sonnets--a sequence in which the last line of one poem becomes the first line of the next. "The strict form became a kind of insulation, a way of protecting myself from the intense pain of the subject matter," writes Nelson. The rigid form distills the words' overwhelming emotion into potent, heart-stopping lines that speak from changing perspectives, including that of a tree. Closing notes offer context to the sophisticated allusions to literature and history, but the raw power of many lines needs no translation. Nelson speaks of human history's deep contradictions: "My country, 'tis both / thy nightmare history and thy grand dream." But there's also the hope that comes from facing the past and moving forward: "In my house, there is still something called grace, / which melts ice shards of hate and makes hearts whole." When matched with Lardy's gripping, spare, symbolic paintings of tree trunks, blood-red roots, and wreaths of thorns, these poems are a powerful achievement that teens and adults will want to discuss together. *Gillian Engberg*

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## Review

"These poems are a powerful achievement that teens and adults will want to discuss together." Booklist, ALA, Starred Review

"Only Marilyn Nelson can take one of the most hideous events of the 20th century and make of it something glorious: An intricate cycle of 15 sonnets--an Heroic Crown, in which the last sonnet is made up of the previous 14. . . . It's a towering achievement, one whose power and anger and love will make breath catch in the throat and bring tears to the eyes." Kirkus Reviews, Starred

"This memorial to the lynched teen is in the Homeric tradition of poet-as-historian. . . . This chosen formality brings distance and reflection to readers, but also calls attention to the horrifically ugly events." School Library Journal, Starred

"A moving elegy indeed. . . . Nelson's penetrating elequence ensures that the lyricism marries and draws strength from the structure rather than simply serving it, and the dramatic directness of the address would make these poems powerful indeed for recitation of readers' theater." The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

"Emmett Till's murder by white racists in 1955 was so brutal that his mother let his tortured body testify to the ugly facts in an open-casket funeral. . . .

The elegant formality of the text, with its subtle power of tone and diction, is accentuated by Lardy's stylized, symbolically abstracted illustrations." Horn Book

"[S]ophisticated poetic form." Book Links January 2008 Book Links, ALA

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Martina Smith:**

This A Wreath for Emmett Till tend to be reliable for you who want to be described as a successful person, why. The reason why of this A Wreath for Emmett Till can be one of many great books you must have is definitely giving you more than just simple reading through food but feed anyone with information that possibly will shock your previous knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your conditions throughout the e-book and printed people. Beside that this A Wreath for Emmett Till forcing you to have an enormous of experience such as rich vocabulary, giving you demo of critical thinking that we all know it useful in your day pastime. So , let's have it appreciate reading.

#### **James Hall:**

Playing with family inside a park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition details. Even you love A Wreath for Emmett Till, you are able to enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still need to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't have it, oh come on its named reading friends.

#### **James Jernigan:**

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you, why because this A Wreath for Emmett Till book written by well-known writer who really knows well how to make book that could be understand by anyone who else read the book. Written throughout good manner for you, leaking every ideas and creating skill only for eliminate your personal hunger then you still doubt A Wreath for Emmett Till as good book not simply by the cover but also from the content. This is one reserve that can break don't ascertain book by its handle, so do you still needing one more sixth sense to pick this!? Oh come on your studying sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

**Clyde King:**

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