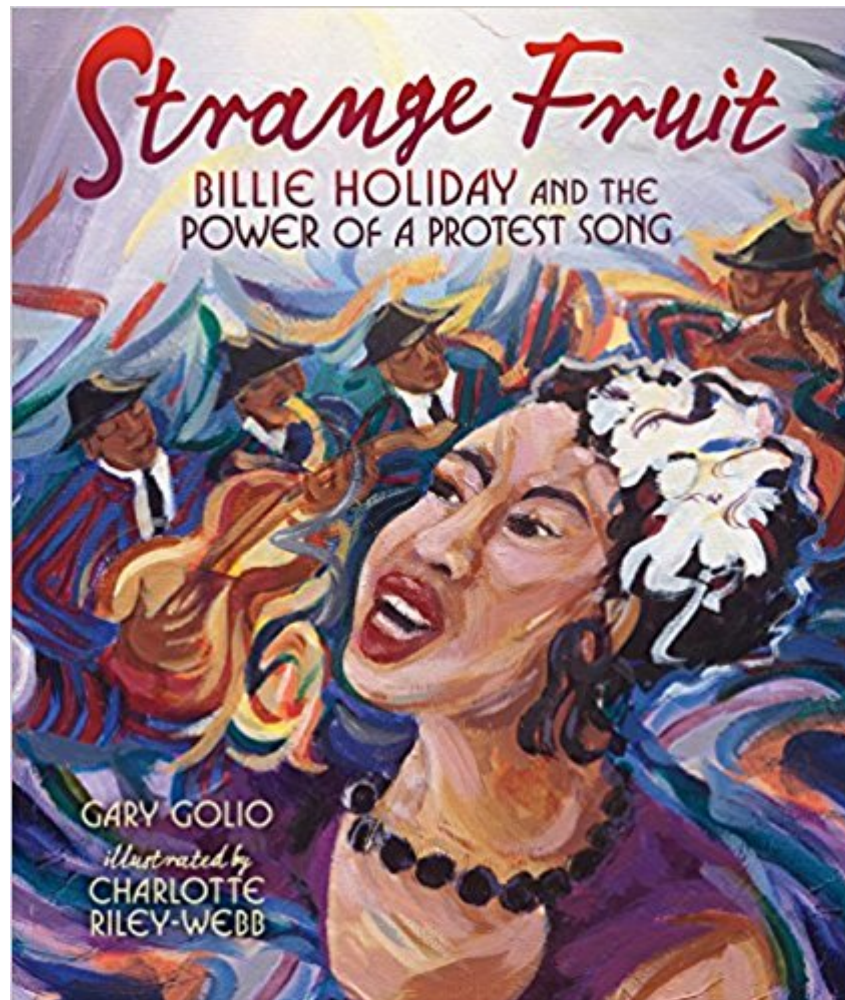




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Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday And The Power Of A Protest Song



Synopsis

The audience was completely silent the first time Billie Holiday performed a song called "Strange Fruit." In the 1930s, Billie was known as a performer of jazz and blues music, but this song wasn't either of those things. It was a song about injustice, and it would change her life forever. Discover how two outsiders Billie Holiday, a young black woman raised in poverty, and Abel Meeropol, the son of Jewish immigrants combined their talents to create a song that challenged racism and paved the way for the Civil Rights movement.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 870 (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,109,842 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 in [Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Music > Jazz](#) #73 in [Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Music > History](#) #254 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Musical](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 6

Customer Reviews

"Lynching: a strange and difficult but important topic for a song and for this picture book. . . . A must-read, must-discuss that will speak to children and linger with adults." --starred, Kirkus Reviews "[A] potent reminder of the power of art to combat intolerance and hate." --starred, Publishers Weekly "This is not an easy book, but it is powerful just like its theme. Consider for guided in-depth discussions on Billie Holiday and U.S. history." --School Library Journal "The format and back matter make this most useful in a classroom setting, but it will be effective in prompting a discussion about one of the darkest times in U.S. history." --Booklist

Gary Golio is an artist and acclaimed picture book author. His *Jimi: Sounds Like a Rainbow* was a New York Times bestseller. Charlotte Riley-Webb, a professional visual artist with a career that spans more than 40 years, resides in the Atlanta area.

4.5 out of 5 stars rounded up. *Strange Fruit* by Gary Golio (author) and Charlotte Riley-Webb (Illustrator) is an absolutely wonderful picture book about Billie Holiday's famous song with the same title. The first thing you notice in this book are the illustrations. They are vibrant and seemingly leap from the pages. They're sort of brash and crazy, but they're absolutely beautiful and just right for this book. I'm not sure of the medium. They appear to be either oil paint or pastels. Perhaps even oil pastels. Whatever was used, the broad strokes and vibrant colors combine just perfectly. The story line of the book is well told and moves along at a decent pace. The prose is well written and it's definitely a story that deserves to be, even needs to be told. It's not a real nice story as far as "happy ever after" and making you smile all the way through, but it's a needed story and a well written one. It will make you think. It may cause difficult discussions between you and any children you read it with, but it's an important story to tell and an important piece of history (and unfortunately, to a point, part of current events as well) that needs to be discussed. The only reason this picture book did not get 5 stars from me is because I felt that at times, the text was difficult to read because of the vibrant illustrations and the small font used. Now, I did read this book as an eBook and not in print format. Perhaps it is easier to read the text in the print format. Other than that small issue, this book is phenomenal and I highly recommend it to everyone. Those who are fans of Billie Holiday will certainly appreciate it, but I believe that it's a great book for everyone, not just those who are fans.

A wonderful and much needed picture book biography of Billie Holiday that focuses on her singing of, arguably, the first important protest song of the 20th century - *Strange Fruit*. The text, tone and amount of information are perfect for kids 4-7th grade. Both I (a K-8 school librarian) and the music teacher will use this in programming. Back matter includes 'What happened after', a biography that fills in blanks, source notes and a selected biography.

A powerful story that more people in our world should hear and listen to.

Great music source.

Billie Holiday had survived a rough childhood that saw her jailed at age 14 and become a successful jazz singer. Despite her success though, she was still forbidden to do things that her white band members were allowed. She had to hide in rooms, take freight elevators and pretend to be someone different in order to stay in hotels and not sleep on the tour bus. This was all dangerous and eventually she quit. She found a new place to sing in Cafe Society, the first jazz club that welcomed African-American audience members. It was there that she was given the song, Strange Fruit, a song that would become her best-known work. A song that was so powerful that it was met with silence the first time she sang it. A song that would come to speak to a new generation as they stand together today. Golio has taken a song that is about lynching and turned it into a picture book. It's a daring subject for a book for young readers, yet he makes it entirely understandable. He uses notes at the end of the book to continue Holiday's story and also speak about lynching and its history in the United States. The bulk of the picture book is about Holiday's struggles in the 1930s with pervasive racism and the way that this song spoke to her personal experience and that of all African-Americans. The illustrations are deep and powerful. They show the pain of racism, the power of song, the energy of a performance and the drama of silence and darkness. Done in acrylic paint and tissue collage, they have a wild freedom of line that works well with the intense subject matter. An important picture book about a song that has transcended generations and speaks to the struggles of today and yesterday. Appropriate for ages 7-11.

My first impression of this book was movement. The bold, swirling strokes of the brush blended people into instruments creating energy and movement on a two-dimensional page. The words are spare but powerfully combined to provide a brief, but passionate glimpse into the life of Billie Holiday. Although the harsher aspects of Holiday's short life are alluded to, no details or explanation are given in the main text. More information, both about the title song and Holiday, is provided at the end, along with source notes and a selected bibliography. I can't wait to share this book with my 5th grade students. Be prepared for questions from discerning listeners/readers who want to know more about Holiday's life and the difficulties that she faced. Students have a knack for homing in on the "juicy bits" that we edit out. The story inspired me to look up more facts about this amazing, troubled singer and I plan to scour my biography section for age-appropriate options (perhaps a "Who Was Billie Holiday?"). This review is based on an advance copy provided by NetGalley. Review originally posted on GoodReads.

I received an ARC of this book for free from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. I loved everything about this book! Charlotte Riley-Webb's illustrations were amazingly lush and evocative of exactly what I imagine the Harlem Renaissance would feel like. I appreciated the sensitive and direct manner that Gary Golio approached topics that are difficult for adults, let alone children. Framing the entire story around the song Strange Fruit was an excellent way to learn about a seminal song and to touch on segregation and the atrocity of lynching. I plan to buy a copy of this book to share with my daughter.

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