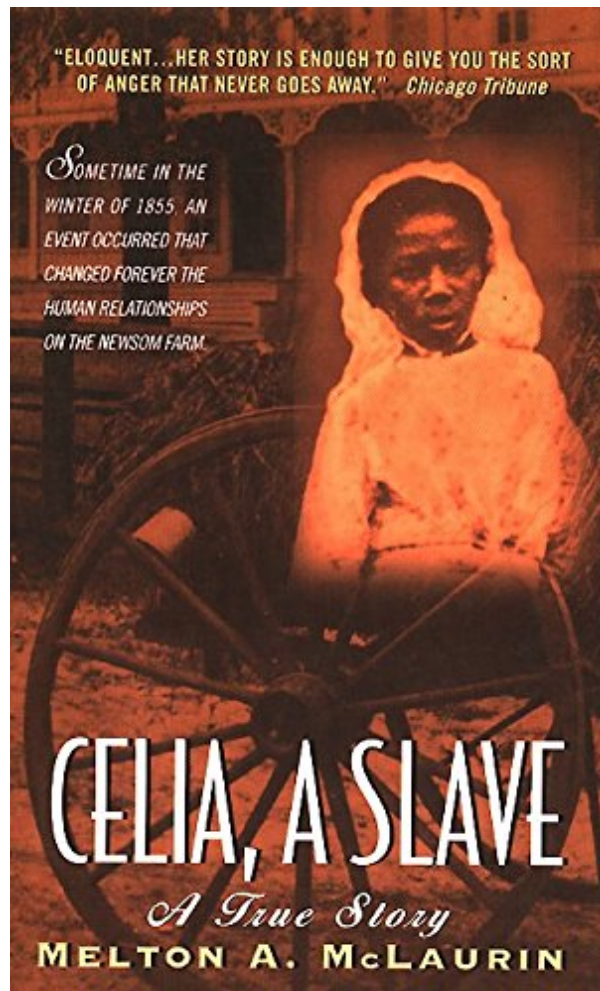


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"ELOQUENT...HER STORY IS ENOUGH TO GIVE YOU THE SORT
OF ANGER THAT NEVER GOES AWAY." *Chicago Tribune*

*SOMETIME IN THE
WINTER OF 1855, AN
EVENT OCCURRED THAT
CHANGED FOREVER THE
HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS
ON THE NEWSOM FARM.*

CELIA, A SLAVE

A True Story

MELTON A. McLAURIN

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From Publishers Weekly

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From School Library Journal

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In 1850, fourteen-year-old Celia became the property of Robert Newsom, a prosperous and respected Missouri farmer. For the next five years, she was cruelly and repeatedly molested by her abusive master--and bore him two children in the process. But in 1855, driven to the limits of her endurance, Celia fought back. And at the tender age of eighteen, the desperate and frightened young black woman found herself on trial for Newsom's murder--the defendant in a landmark courtroom battle that threatened to undermine the very foundations of the South's most cherished institution. Based on court records, correspondences and newspaper accounts past and present, *Celia, A Slave* is a powerful masterwork of passion and scholarship--a stunning literary achievement that brilliantly illuminates one of the most extraordinary events in the long, dark history of slavery in America.

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A weak story with a powerful context

By Jacob J. Shay

The most powerful think about this book is the context that it puts a story in. The book can feel like a lot of speculation at times and can go into details that seem unnecessary but the way the book carefully points at its limited sources and makes educated guesses is part of the nature of what it is doing. You can google the story of the slave Celia in Missouri and think you have an understanding of her story but that doesn't do her or history any justice. I liked the book for the historical picture it painted -it was fascinating to see how almost everyone involved in Celia's trial had served in congress, or how connected the trial was to the ongoing Kansas-Nebraska prelude to the civil war. The book is very good history and well and carefully crafted but in the end only a few pages per chapter were actually dedicated to Celia specifically. For someone well versed in American history, then, the book was more about connecting one small story to a larger picture than learning about a complex group of people in a complex and specific part of Missouri.

In the end I felt like I didn't know more about Celia when I started the book then when I finished. I felt as if I knew more about exactly how and where we learned the facts about Celia's case and story, but I couldn't find real relevance or real significance. The book was a portrait, I feel, not a statement or argument. It is a very good portrait but I don't feel it was an engaging piece of history.

Should it be read? Absolutely. As a way to begin engaging with slavery, a slave society, and a historical Missouri in general the book is perfect. However, if you are looking for something more than an introduction, or some way to further grasp the horrifying past of slavery or to learn about an extraordinary woman you might read something else. I have no doubt that Celia was an extraordinary woman but that doesn't come through in the book. What comes through is that she lived in an extraordinarily volatile time and that we have extraordinarily little information on her -and less on the thousands of other in her situation. I came away from the book questioning how little I know more than feeling like I knew or understood more - a valuable experience but not what I was hoping for when I picked up the book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

CELIA ,THE SLAVE Brings a Forgotten Slave into the Light

By Sally T

This riveting and slim book tells what it can of the story of Celia, a slave whose tragedy played out in rural

Missouri in the 19th century. As he gives us Celia's story, McLaurin clearly explains the history of slavery in Missouri and how it intertwined with the national politics of slavery. Reading the book for that alone is well worth it.

A Missouri farmer buys Celia from an owner whose name is still unknown. The evil of Celia's new bondage is cruelly and fatefully enforced, even as she and her new master travel back to his farm. What happens to her from then on is a reflection of all the evils of slavery. And the fact that there is so much about Celia's life and her identity that cannot be recovered is one of those very evils.

Not to be missed!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Informative

By TAP

I had to read this book for an online History of Missouri class for Mizzou. I was reluctant to read it--who, as a kid, hasn't heard of the terrible ordeals slaves had to endure? Who hasn't had to read about slavery and abolitionists and Frederick Douglass? I thought it would be the same old thing.

I was pleasantly surprised; the author does a fabulous job setting up the historical setting, and shows an appreciation for ALL of the thoughts and feelings of the time period. I was VERY impressed at the author's objectivity--it is easy to get sucked into 21st century pity or anger or blame.

The front and back covers of the book make this seem a bit more like a dramatic story, but it's a very detailed historical account that gives wonderful insight into antebellum Missouri and slavery.

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