



Pemba's Song: A Ghost Story

By Marilyn Nelson, Tonya C. Hegamin

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A Newbery Honor winner collaborates with a new writer in this hip-hop-inspired historical thriller.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 7–10—Pemba, an African-American teen, doesn't want to make the move from Brooklyn to Connecticut no matter how rosy a picture her mother tries to paint. As soon as she sees her new home, she knows something isn't right. At first, she thinks she's imagining things, like the strange mirror that reflects the image of an 18th-century girl. But then the blackouts begin. During them Pemba sees Phyllis, a slave who lived in the house centuries before. Something horrible happened to her all those years ago and now she needs Pemba's help. Working with Abraham, an eccentric old man who lives nearby, Pemba must uncover the girl's story to finally put her to rest. Told through alternating chapters, poetry, and journal entries, this title is sure to appeal to fans of ghost stories as well as historical fiction. There are few ghost stories featuring African-American teens and fewer still that are as well written and interesting as this one. With its brevity, it will make an excellent choice for reluctant readers as well.—*Ginny Collier, Dekalb County Public Library, Decatur, GA*

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From [Booklist](#)

Written in shifting voices and styles, this vivid, collaborative novella tells a supernatural story of a young girl's connection with history. Fourteen-year-old African American Pemba is furious when her mother decides to move from Brooklyn to "Nowhere" Connecticut, where her cell phone "can't even pick up a freaking signal." More upsetting are her strange dreams about a young black girl that begin on the first night in the new house. Abraham, an elderly local who welcomes Pemba and her mother, invites Pemba to help him research African Americans in the town's history. As Pemba's strange visions increase, she confides in Abraham, who helps her accept that she is connecting with an enslaved girl who lived in Pemba's new home in the eighteenth century. Pemba's first-person contemporary narrative combines with verse passages written in the ghost's heartrending voice. The paranormal transitions that enable Pemba to witness the ghost's world feel contrived and jarringly abrupt. Most affecting are passages of hip-hop poetry, written in Pemba's voice, that powerfully translate her deepening sense of African American history and her own strength. Grades 7–10. --Gillian Engberg

About the Author

Noted poet Marilyn Nelson is the author of several highly acclaimed and award-winning books for young readers. *CARVER: A LIFE IN POEMS* received a Newbery Honor medal, a Boston Globe/Horn Book Award, and a Coretta Scott King Honor citation. *A WREATH FOR EMMETT TILL*, also a book told in poetry, won a Printz Honor Award, a Coretta Scott King Honor, and a Boston Globe/Horn Book citation. Ms. Nelson is a multiple National Book Award finalist. Her forthcoming novel, *PEMBA'S SONG*, will be published in 2008, and her picture book, *BEAUTIFUL BALLERINA*, will publish in 2009 (both with Scholastic).

Tonya C. Hegamin is the author of *MOST LOVED IN ALL THE WORLD* and *M+O 4EVR*, both forthcoming from Houghton Mifflin Company. She received a B.A. in Poetry from the University of Pittsburgh and an MFA from The New School University. Tonya has worked as a social worker and teacher for teens in crises and has also taught poetry workshops to at-risk and incarcerated women. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christopher Price:

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