



Title: NINA: A Story of Nina Simone

Author: Traci N. Todd

Illustrator: Christian Robinson

Imprint: G.P Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers

Publisher: Penguin Young Readers

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Age Range*: 4-8

Grade Range: Gr 2-6

BOOK RESUME: NINA: A STORY OF NINA SIMONE

BOOK SYNOPSIS

This luminous, defining picture book biography illustrated by Caldecott Honoree Christian Robinson, tells the remarkable and inspiring story of acclaimed singer Nina Simone and her bold, defiant, and exultant legacy.

Born Eunice Kathleen Waymon in small town North Carolina, Nina Simone was a musical child. She sang before she talked and learned to play piano at a very young age. With the support of her family and community, she received music lessons that introduced her to classical composers like Bach who remained with her and influenced her music throughout her life. She loved the way his music began softly and then tumbled to thunder, like her mother's preaching, and in much the same way as her career. During her first performances under the name of Nina Simone her voice was rich and sweet but as the Civil Rights Movement gained steam, Nina's voice soon became a thunderous roar as she raised her voice in powerful protest in the fight against racial inequality and discrimination.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "Nina Simone's beauty and talent is given prominent expression by multiaward-winning Robinson in this picture-book biography . . . while Todd's prose eloquently tells her story from childhood to fame . . . A worthy biography for all collections and especially for those that serve music-loving children." —*Booklist*, starred review

★ "Todd's telling shines in this skillfully paced portrait of Eunice Kathleen Waymon (1933-2003)—more widely known by her stage name of Nina Simone—which traces her journey from a piano-playing child in North Carolina to later years as a performer, protest song pioneer, and civil rights activist. . . An engaging, affecting, and powerful biography that aptly situates Simone's enduring legacy in musical and social history." —*Publisher's Weekly*, starred review

★ "Some storytellers use words to entertain listeners and readers, while others share their tales in song. *Nina: A Story of Nina Simone* gracefully brings the life of one such legendary musician into readers' hearts. . . Traci N. Todd's straightforward narration is honest and candid . . . [and] fans of Caldecott Honor illustrator Christian Robinson (*Last Stop on Market Street*, *The Bench*) will immediately recognize the bold, distinct shapes that are his hallmark. Robinson outdoes himself here . . . reflecting on the strength, hope and revolution she conveyed in her music." —*BookPage*, starred review

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*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

★ “Todd’s musical prose allows readers into Nina’s perspective, and Robinson’s scenes and portraits absolutely sing with energy, keeping pace perfectly with the text. . . Do not miss this complex story of an American legend.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Todd ends her unflinching narrative with a perfectly placed, direct-address line: “And when she sang of Black children—you lovely, precious dreams—her voiced sounded like hope.” This unexpected, yet needed, outpouring of love is the perfect end to a stunning book.” —*Horn Book Review*, starred review

★ “Compelling and eloquent...Amplifying *Nina*’s humanity is Robinson’s signature acrylic paint and collage art (*Last Stop on Market Street*; *Milo Imagines the World*), which always hums and thrums with life...Robinson creates stunning visual music for Traci N. Todd’s vibrant picture book biography of the great musician Nina Simone.”

—*Shelf Awareness*, starred review

★ “Discussions of racism and resistance are undertaken with a skillful hand, not exceeding the tone or maturity level appropriate for young readers. Robinson’s jewel-tone artwork is colorful, engaging, and complements Todd’s lyrical text . . . An excellent and magnetic biography, this book is highly recommended in all elementary collections and should be considered for libraries serving older students.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

“Luminous . . . [and] visually rapturous . . . Robinson imbues *Nina* with sumptuous colors . . . His elegantly simple figures recall the work of Ezra Jack Keats and occasionally Charles M. Schulz. . . Simone’s precocity, which shines through . . . is nurtured in intimate moments sitting on her father’s lap at the keyboard, letting him guide her as they play “good-time jazz” together, and on Sundays when she provides the rhythmic and “rolling” accompaniment to her minister mother’s sermons. Todd brings nuance to Simone’s musicianship in ways that should prove instructive to curious young readers. . . The journey to merge her astonishing virtuosity and professional achievements with her bold activism is summed up by the arresting portrait of the artist seated at her baby grand and flanked by four little Black girls.” —*The New York Times Book Review*

“Todd moves effortlessly between silky narration marked by subtle wordplay, and pointed references to Simone’s musical activism. Robinson’s collage compositions convey critical civil rights context in scenes playing out atop Simone’s grand piano strings, often fiery images that contrast with the pictures of Simone’s childhood origin story and her front-stage panache.” —*The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- A 2022 Bank Street Best Children’s Book of the Year selection
- A 2022 ALA Notable Children’s Book selection
- A 2022 NCTE Orbis Pictus Award Winner

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- A 2022 Jane Addams Children’s Book Award Finalist
- A 2022 ALA Rise: A Feminist Book Project List Pick
- A 2022 NCTE/CLA Notable Children’s Books in the Language Arts Award Winner
- A 2022 ILA Notable Book for a Global Society Award Winner
- A 2022 NCSS-CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book selection
- A 2021 Publishers Weekly Best Book selection
- A 2021 Kirkus Best Book selection
- A 2021 Horn Book Fanfare List selection
- A 2021 Booklist Editors’ Choice selection
- A 2021 New York Public Library Best Book selection
- A 2021 Chicago Public Library Best Book selection
- A 2021 Black Caucus American Library Association Best of the Best Booklist selection
- A Georgia Children’s Book Award selection
- A Nevada Reading Week selection
- A New Hampshire Cochecho Readers’ Award selection
- A Texas Topaz Nonfiction Reading List selection

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [TeachingBooks.net resources](https://www.teachingbooks.net)

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