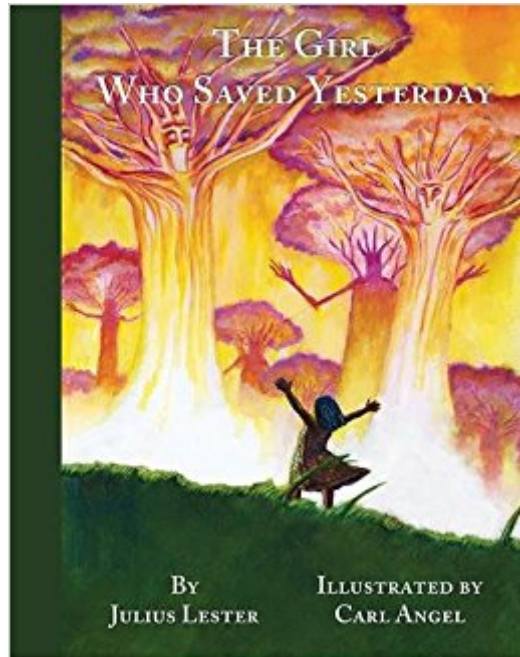




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# **The Girl Who Saved Yesterday**



## Synopsis

When the girl, Silence, is sent by the trees to save Yesterday, she doesn't know what her task is, only that it is important. Returning to the village that cast her out, Silence recognizes her purpose: to join the dead with the living in an act that celebrates their memory.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 990 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Creston Books (May 10, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1939547245

ISBN-13: 978-1939547248

Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 0.3 x 11.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #345,499 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 in [Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > African](#) #177 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Africa](#) #291 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Death & Dying](#)

Age Range: 4 - 9 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 4

## Customer Reviews

Gr 2-5 • Silence, a girl banished from her village and raised by trees in the forest, is sent on a mysterious quest in this poetic allegory. "We need you to return to your village and save Yesterday,' Wonderboom, the most ancient of the ancient trees, told her. 'All the Yesterdays,' added Gloomy Night, whose limbs were as thick as sorrow." The trees cannot tell the girl how to save Yesterday, nor do they explain why it must be saved. Readers are told just a bit as ThunderSnow, arriving at the edge of the village, "lay [Silence] gently at the foot of a tree that had been made ill by Yesterday." Other sickened trees are there, too. In the village center, Silence finds "the mountain which loomed like a memory no one could recall." Unhappy to see her, the villagers leave Silence to endure what seems to be an annual powerful nighttime eruption of vivid light from the mountain. Angel's paintings are bold and often dramatic. The torrid light show, the frightened face of the girl in the midst of it, scenes of her encounter with the angry folks in the village of thatched huts,

her subsequent race up the mountain, and the uncovering of the first mysterious glowing round stone are compelling. The large, gnarled trees in the forest and on the mountain, humanized in the text, have enormous, elongated human facial features embedded high in their trunks. The fading light of the morning somehow brings Silence an understanding of what she must do, and her heroic unearthing of the Yesterdays brings the villagers up the long-feared mountain in joyful celebration. There are elusive elements and unanswered questions here and many lush analogies in the prose. In a concluding author's note, Lester notes worldwide cultural practices honoring the dead. "It is important to remember the Ancestors, regardless of whose they are." Some readers will find the vague references confusing and the folksy trees and lighted stones just plain odd. But there's appealing adventure here, and the human/natural world intersection, the courageous quest, and the idea of Yesterday's importance raise thought-provoking questions. VERDICT A fine choice for book discussion in classrooms or library programs. —Margaret Bush, Simmons College, Boston

Readers young and old will be struck immediately by the conundrum created by the title of *The Girl Who Saved Yesterday*, Coretta Scott King Award-winning author Julius Lester's first book for several years (and well worth the wait). The beautifully crafted narrative can be read on many levels, and in this lovely edition it is laid over Carl Angel's colourful illustrations that are expansive both physically in their spilling off the pages and through the multiplicity of meaning they echo from the story itself — from the tenderness of the trees at the beginning, with their clattering of limbs and branches, to the sharp arrows of light that rain down from the misunderstood mountain, to the gentle embrace of the ancestors at the end. In bald terms, the story is a simple one: an abandoned orphan girl is brought up by ancient trees who eventually send her back to her village to prevent future disaster caused by a disregard for the past: but of course, in essence it all goes much deeper than that — and through the names given to the characters, including the personification of abstracts, the story takes on a depth of meaning that is only limited by the reader's own experience and/or imagination. In fact, the story has an epic quality and feels significant in what it conveys to us here and now in the twenty-first century about memory and the importance of not allowing those who have gone before us to be forgotten. The girl's name is Silence; and the trees, who have names like Gloomy Night and Wonderboom, and who do not speak with words, of course, but like winds whispering to clouds (isn't that beautiful?), send her back to the village to save Yesterday. She doesn't even know who or what Yesterday is but she instinctively climbs the mountain that overshadows the village. Though the villagers are frightened of the mountain,

believing that it threatens them with fiery anger, Silence recognises its cries as the sounds of a heart that was not loved. At the top, she does indeed find Yesterday the stones of the Ancestors that are being choked by weeds and neglect. Gradually the villagers join Yesterday in clearing the ground, and in so doing, their care of Yesterday, brings hope for the future. Meanwhile, Silence is called by the trees to go somewhere else to save another Yesterday and so the quest at the centre of the story is opened up for readers to ponder and share in if they choose. The illustrations are as finely-tuned as the text I think it is especially astute that the stones of the ancestors are very simple like large, flat river stones, polished through time. As Silence cleans around them, they glow a pink as gentle and soft as a first kiss and by the time the whole village arrives, the illustration shows the stones as a vast mass that really does seem to be pulsing with life. Whilst the emphasis of the words is on the importance of remembering the past, the illustration has futuristic overtones that can only add to the depth of meaning of the story. I'm probably making it sound much more complicated than it is in fact, like any good fable, *The Girl Who Saved Yesterday* can, of course, be taken at face value. However, the book does allow readers to set the imagination whirling as it contemplates the paradox inherent in its title, which, for me, is where the joy of it lies: that coupled with the beautifully crafted writing and illustrations. And although young children may not be able to put their intuitive understanding of the conundrum into words, they will certainly be touched by its essence; and their demands to have the story read again and again will be proof enough that they are tapping its depths. Wonderful! (Mirrors, Windows, Doors)"Carl Angel's work dances off the page with vivid colors and dramatic page design. The characters come to life in rich, magical hues, leading the reader deep into Julius Lester's wonderful story."--John Hendrix, author-illustrator of 'Shooting at the Stars'"The Girl Who Saved Yesterday reads like an ancient myth. At times I found myself getting lost in the dreamlike text, but the joys of re-reading allowed me to dig deeper into the stunning illustrations. A challenging, but ultimately very provocative tale with illustrations to match."--Martha Pettit, Folio Books"A deep and mysterious fable that bursts forth as a celebration of life and nature."--G. Neri, Coretta Scott King honor-winning author of *Yummy*"The Girl Who Saved Yesterday" is a powerful, poetic fable that continually erupts from its paper pages of living images and tender, reverent deep thoughts. Not just the characters, even the images, thoughts and ideas portrayed are larger than life, mega-dreams of immense power capable of great healing or great harm if neglected or misused. A thrilling wedding of images and narrative inspires the reader to rise to the powerful visions conveyed in "The Girl Who Saved Yesterday." Peopled with a powerful black young heroine, many stern but loving trees and animals, plus living stones on

a mountain forgotten by a village who abandoned their savior, the girl the trees named Silence, the story erupts like lava with rainbows. A need for memory and meaning, for honoring, for stories of history, for Yesterday, is at the core of the quest of "The Girl Who Saved Yesterday." This beautiful book may be too large for small minds to comprehend easily. However, children will adjust to its powerful cadences and compelling rhythms with joy and anticipation. It is a story of the need for human wisdom, for memory, for the most basic honoring of ancestors, for ceremony for the forgotten past. "The Girl Who Saved Yesterday" breaks barriers, boundaries, and expectations and leaps beyond to a space where all things have meaning and deserve to be loved. It is a soul-enlarging journey.--Midwest Book Review"

In this age of automaticity, electronic immediacy, and carpe diem, this book delivers a rare exultation: remember the Ancestors. Silence, a child whom the villagers have cast out into the forest because she tried to climb the mountain to find her dead parents, now lives happily among nurturing trees. When the most ancient of the trees, Wonderboom, tells Silence she must return to the village to "save Yesterday," at first she fails to understand how but reluctantly returns to the hostile village. Morning Star and Sun tell Silence what she must do, and with a scythe, she cuts a path up the mountainside, where the trees help her find glowing stones that she thinks must be her parents. Silence then shows the villagers how to honor their dead, for the Ancestors resent being forgotten. Lester sets this literary folk tale somewhere in Africa, where the villagers wear bright, patterned fabrics, the women wear beautiful head wraps, and all of the characters have dark brown skin. While Lester sprinkles interesting metaphors and similes on nearly every page, Angel paints the story to life with personified trees, an impressive array of topographies, and a girl who will stop at nothing to follow her instincts. When Silence speaks, change happens. A powerful tale that should help children of all ages embrace the fact that dead does not have to mean gone. (Picture book. 4-9)"--STARRED Review, Kirkus"

Newbery Honor author Lester brings together folktale elements for a tale of planetary healing, and Angel (Sky High) contributes dramatic, feverish paintings of African animals, thatched huts, and supernatural entities."--Publishers Weekly"

A young girl named Silence, who has been raised by the ancient trees of the forest, is directed to return to her village in order to save all the Yesterdays. Obediently she complies, although she doesn't quite understand her task. Eventually she climbs a nearby mountain where she uncovers some glowing pink stones that mark the graves of village ancestors. Once the area around the stones is cleaned and restored, the markers release memories that save the Yesterdays. This lyrical fable fairly brims with rich language, and while the story's meaning may take a few readings to become clear, the pleasure of Lester's words makes the journey worthwhile. Angel's lush and colorful spreads beautifully complement the text,

setting the story in a small African village. Most impressive are his portrayals of personified trees and the magical memories that emanate from the ancestors and their graves. In addition to providing some excellent examples of vivid prose, this story is sure to spark discussion of cultural customs that honor the dead."#151; Kay Weisman, Booklist"From a tree 'whose limbs were as thick as sorrow' to a mountain 'which loomed like a memory no one could recall,' Lester's folkloric world comes to life along with his powerful message: Always remember."--50 Sensational Books of Summer, Scholastic Teacher Magazine"Written in the style of a fable, the story honors the past and reminds us that today demands knowledge of yesterday. The illustrations are a brilliantly vivid complement to this poetically written tale."--San Jose Mercury News"From the Newbery Honor award-winner and master storyteller Julius Lester comes his long-awaited picture book, *The Girl Who Saved Yesterday*. In this poetic myth, #147;when the people of the village sent the girl into the forest, it was the trees as ancient as breath who took her in and raised her. The young girl, named Silence by the trees, is soon tasked with returning to her village to save all of the Yesterdays. Beyond this unusual instruction, the trees can give her no further detail. The villagers feared that Silence would anger the mountain #147;which loomed like a memory no one could recall. When Silence returned, the villagers watched her brave a mysterious night alone, where shafts of light from the mountain filled the sky and passed through her; the voices carried by the light were #147;all shrieking like bolts of lightning sharpened by hopelessness, and the very land shook as if it were sobbing. The girl realizes she must return to the forgotten place and find her parents. In this beautifully written book, Silence recognizes the sounds of an unloved heart. Determination takes her to the mountain's top; there she discovers the source of sadness and understands how to end the illness which had befallen this land. Lester's poetic lines are complemented by Angel's bright, expressive images that help young readers understand the heart of this story: you cannot have Today without Yesterday. Once the ancestors' memories are found, the spirits #147;encircled the people of the village, holding them in an embrace as gentle as eternity. The Girl Who Saved Yesterday, published by the wonderful Marissa Moss at Creston Books, is a powerful story with strong mythical qualities, full of beautiful metaphors holding deeper truths. A young girl is found abandoned at the foot of a large mountain near a small village. She is convinced her parents live at the top and every day begins a journey to return there. But the villagers are afraid her persistence will anger the spirits, and believing that they are doing the right thing, they take the young girl into a large forest and abandon her. She is adopted by the ancient trees that populate the forest, and they name her Silence. Years pass, and some of the trees start

getting sick--they tell Silence that she needs to save Yesterday. None of them can tell her what that means, but it does require her to return to the village where she used to live. Silence's return to her old village prompts an unusual light storm from the mountain where she was found years ago, an occurrence the villagers live in fear of. Following the trails of light, Silence discovers a field of bright stones at the top of the mountain, representations of their ancestors who have been forgotten by the villagers. These stones are central to saving the trees and helping the villagers remember. But will Silence be able to break through the ignorance and betrayals? You'll have to read it to find out.

Mythic Poetry in *The Girl Who Saved Yesterday* by Julius Lester and Carl Angel ~  
Post by Mira Reisberg 6/27/2016 0 Comments

Picture Julius Lester's *The Girl Who Saved Yesterday*, published by the wonderful Marissa Moss at Creston Books, is a powerful story with strong mythical qualities, full of beautiful metaphors holding deeper truths. A young girl is found abandoned at the foot of a large mountain near a small village. She is convinced her parents live at the top and every day begins a journey to return there. But the villagers are afraid her persistence will anger the spirits, and believing that they are doing the right thing, they take the young girl into a large forest and abandon her. She is adopted by the ancient trees that populate the forest, and they name her Silence. Years pass, and some of the trees start getting sick--they tell Silence that she needs to save Yesterday. None of them can tell her what that means, but it does require her to return to the village where she used to live. Silence's return to her old village prompts an unusual light storm from the mountain where she was found years ago, an occurrence the villagers live in fear of. Following the trails of light, Silence discovers a field of bright stones at the top of the mountain, representations of their ancestors who have been forgotten by the villagers. These stones are central to saving the trees and helping the villagers remember. But will Silence be able to break through the ignorance and betrayals? You'll have to read it to find out.

Picture Julius Lester is a fantastic author whose writing carries strong mythical qualities, full of beautiful metaphors containing deeper truths. His descriptive similes pack surprisingly emotional punches despite the dream-like quality of his words - "Before anyone could ask, Sun began sliding from the sky like disappointment that would never be redeemed." This story is absolutely haunting and memorable in the best of ways. Carl Angel does a magnificent job of bringing this legend-inspiring story to life. From the very beginning, Silence's adoptive family of trees captures the reader's attention and doesn't let it go. While the trees do have humanoid characteristics, they are clearly enigmas with facial features reminiscent of wooden tribal masks seen in a wide variety of cultures. His work with color to provide impact and emphasize light and darkness is truly remarkable, and many of his illustrations have a slightly blurred soft-focus effect

that adds to the mythical quality of Silence's journey to save Yesterday."--Children's Book Academy"A timeless folktale set in an unspecified African country. In poetic language, the picture book tells a powerful story about caring for our ancestors and including the dead in our communities. It sends the reassuring message to children that dead doesn't have to mean gone and forgotten. Carl Angel's bright and vivid illustrations bring this lyrical folktale to life and add to its mysterious feel."--Multicultural Book of the Month, Colours of Us

"The Girl Who Saved Yesterday" by Julius Lester, with breathtaking illustrations by Carl Angel, is more than just a book.....it is an adventure!!The story takes you on an incredible ride with the title character named "Silence." As we read the book, we felt like we were on the courageous journey with her. It is truly a great story that allows you to escape and feel like you are on the odyssey with "Silence." It is thoroughly enhanced with the dynamic drawings.I appreciate that the author wrote in a style that both children and adults could enjoy together. The beautiful artwork that went so perfectly with the story was riveting. There is so much detail and captivating colors in the pictures that it forces you to continue looking at the pictures even after you finish reading each page.I would recommend this book for children and adults of all ages. It is a fantastic read and is so beautifully illustrated!!! This book is a treasure!FIVE STARS!!

I purchased this book to read to my nearly 4 and 6 year old daughters. What a great decision! It is a fantastic story filled with important lessons about nature, community, bravery, and remembering and honoring your ancestors, to name a few. It's opened lines of communication about these subjects and when they ask questions, it's a great opportunity for me to teach them about the significance of everything that is happening in the story. The author's use of imagery and metaphors is beautiful and descriptive and the illustrations are absolutely stunning. The girls were mesmerized the first time I read it to them. The story is truly brought to life by the vivid images on each page and they always ask for "The Girl Who Saved Yesterday" for their bedtime story. What a great find! It's a wonderful book for all ages and I absolutely recommend this to everyone.

For years, our 9 year old has gone to sleep while listening to his favorite Julius Lester audiobook. And we were already familiar with Carl Angel from the illustrations in his other books. So it was a no-brainer to place a pre-order when we learned that they were combining their talents to create The Girl Who Saved Yesterday. We ended up receiving our copy of the book before the announced release date, and we were not disappointed. After seeing the book we ordered another copy to



donate to our son's school library. The richly illustrated book weaves a tale about honoring our ancestors and how it's important to remember our past, and how it makes all of our todays and tomorrows possible. This book would be a valuable addition to any bookshelf.

Truly Outstanding- A wonderful story to remind everyone the significance of remembering our ancestors. While I was reading this poetic story to my daughter, she was truly captivated by the brilliant illustrations and felt the need to touch the powerful images on each page that embraced her imagination. The artistry in this book is powerful and brings the story to life. I couldn't have asked for more!

All great Children's books use imagination to guide the reader into a better understanding of the world around them. The Girl Who Saved Yesterday does this beautifully. Carl Angels illustrations are refreshing and Julius Lester's words are carefully crafted. I truly enjoyed this book and hope many others will too.

Amazing book! The illustration is unbelievable!!! Such a beautiful book!

Awesome Book!!! Excellent Illustrations!!!!

It was the illustrator, Carl Angel, who asked me to review this book. So I will start with the illustrations. They are double-page spread paintings that are worthy of an art museum. Dynamic, expressive, and insightful, they pull you into the page. The story takes place in Africa. The trees, that have taken the little girl in and raised her, remind me a little of the Ents in Tolkien's book. These ones, however, are more exotic and spiritual. The monkey, parrot, villagers, elephant, and the lion are vivid and realistic. The heroine, Silence, is a beautiful young woman whose task is to save the village that abandoned her. You can almost feel the texture of her hair. When she braves the mountain, going against the village rules, we have no doubt that she will succeed in her quest. Her long strides up the mountain, scythe in hand, show us Silence's determination and fearlessness. When she speaks to the trees, she has almost achieved the status of goddess in her pose and sense of command. But then, Carl Angel softens her appearance when she uncovers the markers of the forgotten ancestors. At first she is shocked, then again Silence is determined to change things, and finally joyous. Every detail in the pages of illustration contribute to this story. The girl, loved and raised by the trees, wears a dress patterned in leaves and an armband made of

twigs. The sky changes to reflect what is happening in the story. The text is a fable, almost legendary, and Carl Angel's illustrations frame it perfectly. A little on the story: The villagers have forgotten their ancestors. Because of this, frightening things have been happening. Once the grave markers are found and the ancestors are honored, both night and day become times of peace and harmony. The story ends with Silence returning to the trees that loved and cared for her. Although the villagers want to thank her and ask for her forgiveness, she does not return. She already knows her place in the universe. There is much to discuss about both text and illustrations. An unusual, exceptional book. I was given a copy of this book for my Little Free Library in exchange for a book review.

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