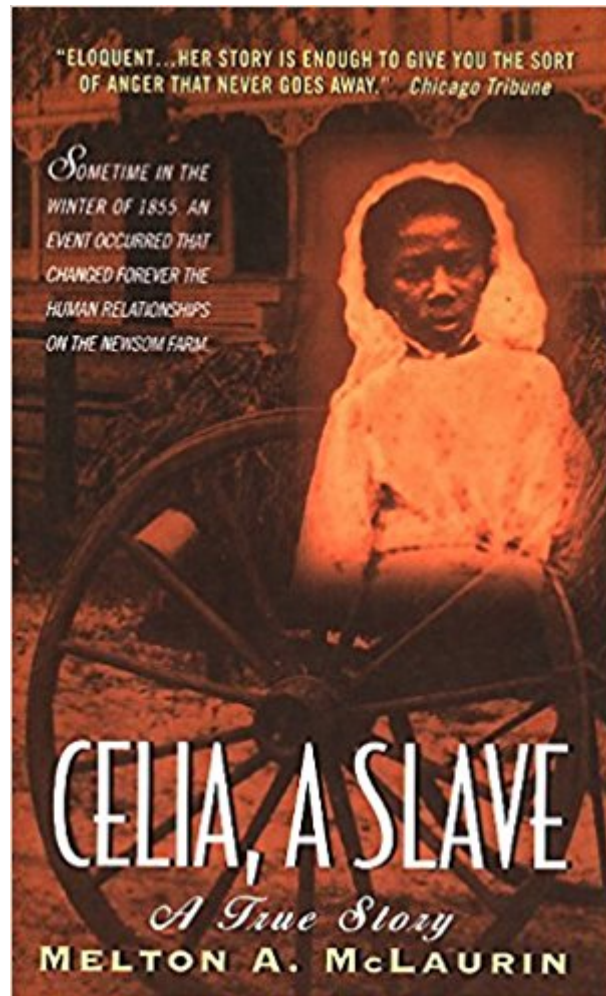




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# Celia, A Slave



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## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This moving and masterfully told true story concerns the abuse and execution of a female black slave in antebellum Missouri. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

YA-- A remarkable biography of a young woman who at the age of 14 became the working and sexual slave of her widowed Missouri master. After bearing two of his children, and falling in love with a fellow bondsman, Celia tried to sever the sexual relationship with her enslaver. He raped her;

she killed him while try to defend herself. She was convicted of murder and hanged at the age of 19. McLaurin has masterfully researched judicial, historical, and contemporary materials in preparing this compelling and thoughtful narrative. Enhanced by its sensitivity and brevity, this book is a provocative starting point for discussion of its many ethical, legal, historical, and social issues. It should be required reading for high school students.- Catherine vanSonnenberg, San Diego Public LibraryCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Excellent book on a rare case of an enslaved African woman brought to trial for the murder of her master who started to sexually abuse her on the way home from the auction. She was only fourteen. The specifics of the trial are placed in a historical context: 1850's. This non-fiction is a tragic story that accentuates the double jeopardy of enslaved African females at the time.

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!

A masterpiece on survival. Love it.

Celia is a true story about a young African-American woman who was purchased by an elderly Missouri man to be his concubine. As a resident on his farm in her own cabin, Celia becomes romantically attached to another slave. She is then forced into a dilemma: either break off her relationship with her own and be faithful to a man of her own race or continue the master-sex slave condition. She kills her owner and is subsequently tried, convicted, and hanged. The book covers the owner's beginning, his purchase of Celia, her conflicts, the murder and the trial with a deft hand by the author. What makes the book so outstanding is the author placing the whole story in the context of the country in the 1850s in such a way that the reader gets insights into the period. Furthermore, the author does this in a manner in a judicious manner that allows the reader to see the tragedy of Celia and 19th century dilemma of slavery in America.

The author does a pretty good job of a case analysis going back and forth (often at dizzying speeds) between the murder case, the political scene at the time (The Missouri Compromise), and the effect this case probably had on society at the time. No doubt, it brought a lot of media attention since the author got most of his material from newspaper accounts. The author tries to be dispassionate but how can you be when covering the story. There are a lot of unknowns in the case that leaves one to thinking what really happened but a smart reader can infer.

On the whole, I really enjoyed this book, and I think it is a worthwhile read for someone already well read on the slave history, but it is such a narrow occurrence that it may not be useful for some just getting beginning to dive into American slavery. It is the story of Celia, a slave who murdered her master in Missouri, but it does not give the vast historical understanding that some other texts can. With that said, it was a good read, and one worth reading if you are already familiar with the slave south.

I read this for a history class and thought it was a really good and descriptive account of slavery and the justice system. If you're interested in history, then this would be a nice read because it doesn't read like a history book.

"Yet the lives of lesser figures, men and women who lived and died in virtual autonomy, often better illustrate certain aspects of the major issues of a particular period than do (others who achieve national prominence)". The introduction by Melton A. McLaurin sets up a well researched and thought out work regarding the life of a female slave, caught killing her owner for raping her over a period of years. The author does two very important things very well in this book. He demonstrates in very real terms the hopelessness of women in particular during this sordid period of American history AND he places in a timeline perspective just before the outbreak of the Civil War when tensions were high, especially in her "home" state of Missouri, where the stakes could not have been higher with the question of the expansion of slavery into newly admitted states was being hotly contested. While it would be impossible to argue that she would ever get a fair "trial" McLaurin astutely walks us through a real defense team doing their best in a time period where ANY notion of fairness is null and void and, specifically, why this is the case. This book is a must read for any serious students of the "peculiar institution". It is remarkable how the author takes an "anonymous" life and demonstrates how an individual could be and was treated as property and degraded to the

depths of our ability to comprehend while weaving in the fast moving antebellum period and the legislation, politics and emotions of the time.

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