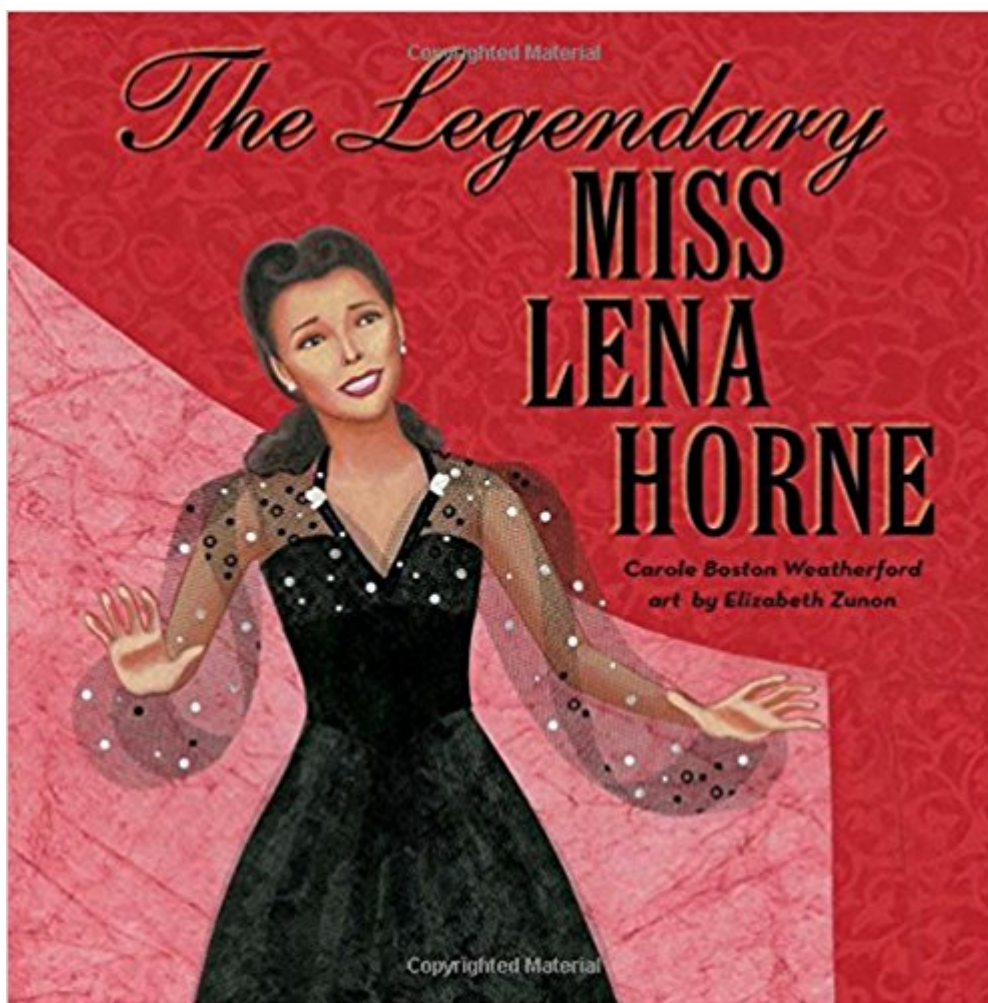


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# The Legendary Miss Lena Horne



## Synopsis

Celebrate the life of Lena Horne, the pioneering African American actress and civil rights activist, with this inspiring and powerful picture book from award-winning author Carole Boston Weatherford. You have to be taught to be second class; you're not born that way. Lena Horne was born into the freedom struggle, to a family of teachers and activists. Her mother dreamed of being an actress, so Lena followed in her footsteps as she chased small parts in vaudeville, living out of a suitcase until MGM offered Lena something more—the first ever studio contract for a black actress. But the roles she was considered for were maids and mammies, stereotypes that Lena refused to play. Still, she never gave up. “Stormy Weather” became her theme song, and when she sang “This Little Light of Mine” at a civil rights rally, she found not only her voice, but her calling.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1010 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 48 pages

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers (January 24, 2017)

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-1481468244

Product Dimensions: 11 x 0.4 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #211,732 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #58 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Performing Arts #195 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s #366 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Multicultural

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Gr 3-5 • A lyrical biography from award-winning author Weatherford (Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement). The narrative follows Horne throughout her life and highlights her talent, activism, career highs and lows, love of reading, and lifelong dedication to civil rights. While the format is that of a picture book, the text, which alternates

between short phrases and longer narrative paragraphs, may require a sophisticated reader. Complex concepts (studio contracts, blacklisting, lynching) are neither glossed over nor extensively addressed. Where this volume truly shines, though, is in its straightforward but multifaceted approach to the complicated realities of Horne's stardom, from segregated venues to skin-darkening makeup, contract negotiations to civil rights rallies and parenting. Weatherford celebrates Horne for her skill and for changing the game for those to come ("Because Lena refused/to darken rear doors,/black stars now gleam/on red carpets"). Zunon's paint and collage illustrations fill the pages with rich colors and remain true to the glamor of Horne's performances. Occasional text boxes featuring song titles or quotations work to varying success. Back matter includes an author's note about Weatherford's own connection with Horne and a list of further reading (however, the two print suggestions are written for older students). VERDICT Though it will likely need some selling on the part of librarians, this is a carefully crafted offering for thoughtful readers interested in the intersection of music, stardom, and civil rights. —Katya Schapiro, Brooklyn Public Library

\* "Weatherford's writing is succinct and inspirational. Zunon's oil paint and cut-paper collage illustrations are more than a match for Horne's dynamic onstage presence. Their dramatic design showcases a . . . memorable life dedicated to music and civil rights, presented with commensurate style." (Kirkus Reviews, starred review) "Where this volume truly shines is in its straightforward but multifaceted approach to the complicated realities of Horne's stardom. . . . Weatherford celebrates Horne for her skill and for changing the game for those to come. . . . Zunon's paint and collage illustrations fill the pages with rich colors and remain true to the glamor of Horne's performances." (School Library Journal) "An exceptionally handsome book. . . . Weatherford's informative yet succinct text is juxtaposed against a happily oversize picture-book format that allows enough room for Zunon's impressive oil-paint and collage artwork." (Booklist, starred review) "Weatherford and Zunon vibrantly capture the setbacks and triumphs of African-American performer Lena Horne tracing her rise from a Brooklyn childhood to a singer and actress who faced persistent racism." (Publishers Weekly, starred review)

Born into a family of educators and activists, Lena Horne grew to be an African-American star and civil rights activist. As a child, Lena's parents dreamed of making it big. Her father was a street hustler and her mother was an actress. As a small child, she was left with her grandmother in Brooklyn while her parents sought their fortune. From her grandmother, Lena

learned about the value of education, good manners, and black pride. But soon Lena's mother returned and took Lena on the road with her. During the Great Depression, her mother decided to put Lena on stage. Lena soon outshone her mother, becoming the first African-American actress to get a studio contract. She eventually also found her voice in the civil rights movement. Weatherford shows Horne as a small child torn between the dreams of her grandmother and her mother. Then in the middle of the book, a transformation happens and Lena takes to the stage, becoming a star. The book beautifully weaves together the two dreams of grandmother and mother, showing how Horne's life honors them both and how her career evolved to become large enough to encompass everyone's wishes. Weatherford uses text carefully and deftly, making sure that the book remains readable by younger readers. There is a feeling of verse to her prose that invites readers in. Zunon's illustrations are done in oil paint and cut paper collage. The paper collage adds patterns and texture to the images. The paintings provide the people, expressions, and emotions. They show Horne growing and changing, transforming before the reader's eyes into a star. This is a gorgeous picture book biography honoring a woman who broke new ground in civil rights using her career and her voice. Appropriate for ages 6-8.

"You have to be taught to be second class; you're not born that way." What a powerful statement that was said by Miss Horne and one she proved time and time again through her actions and words. This book gives a complete account of her life from birth, career, and death (that can be found in bibliography notes). Growing up, I often saw movies that featured Lena Horne and found her to be a talented and a beautiful woman. Her voice was lovely. Of course being of "privilege" I had no idea what her life was truly like or what she had to endure to be in those movies. This book gave me an insight to her complete endurance and fight for civil rights. She paved a way for the musical and movies stars of today, they should be grateful that she did. She did it with dignity and head held high. This book has opened my eyes further about this lovely woman and I am the better for it. I am only sorry that I never met her and that her voice musically and for civil rights is now gone. One would be amiss to not know about Miss Horne and this book should be in every classroom and homeschool room shelves. 5 stars! Disclosure: I obtained a copy of this book at my local library. The views here are 100% my own and may differ from yours. ~M.M. Hudson aka Naila Moon

Before reading this book my only exposure to Miss Lena Horne was a brief appearance she made

years ago on The Cosby Show. After reading this book I have a much greater appreciation for the talents as well as courage of Miss Lena Horne. Show business has such fame and fortune associated with it that sometimes it's easy to overlook the challenges. And to be a black woman in show business at a time when segregation and Jim Crow laws were still in effect was even more challenging. Weatherford does a great job of presenting a simplified version of Horne's life, appropriate for young readers, while still giving a glimpse into the values and beliefs and struggles of a real woman. Zunon's illustrations beautifully complement the text and the short sidebars add interesting tidbits with references to famous quotes and songs presented by Miss Lena Horne. This is a fabulous picture book biography that made me want to know more about a woman who saw and experienced a great deal in her 92 years.

This is one of the most beautiful picture book biographies I have ever seen. The cover art is swoon worthy. Large format picture book that details Lena Horne's life. I am thrilled that a biography about this inspirational woman was created. Children should be aware of her struggles and her many accomplishments. Fabulous!

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