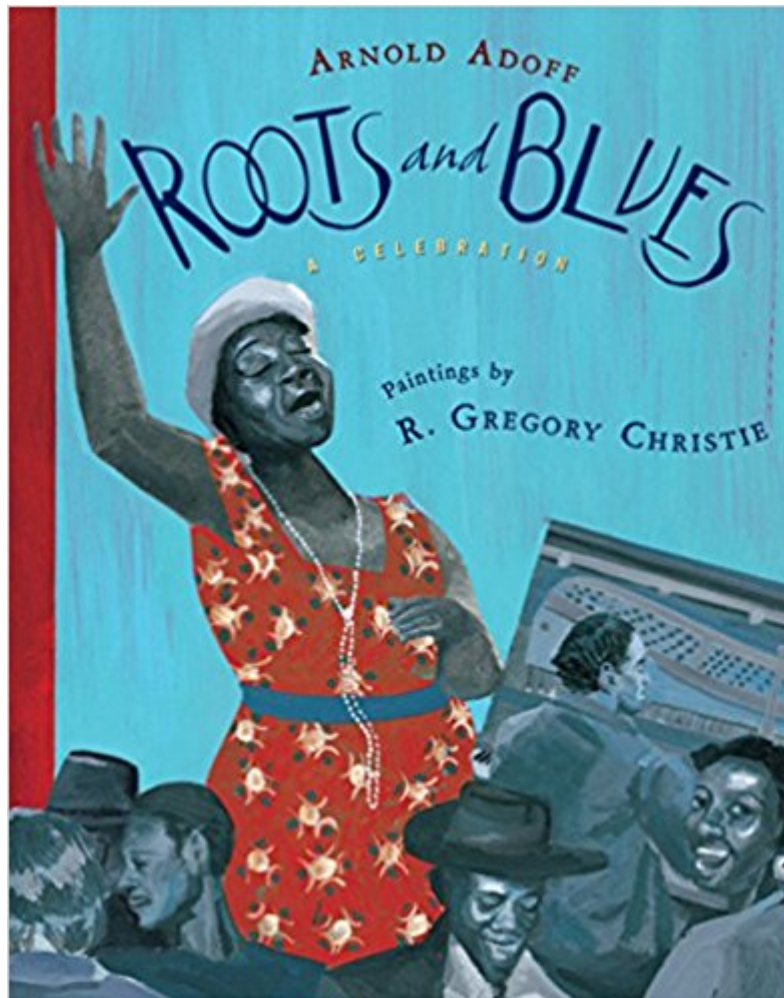




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# Roots And Blues: A Celebration



## Synopsis

Through poems and poetic prose pieces, acclaimed children's author Arnold Adoff celebrates that uniquely American form of music called the blues. In his signature â œshaped speechâ • style, he creates a narrative of moments and joyous music, from the drums of the ancestors, the red dirt of the plantations, the current of the mighty Mississippi, and the shackles, blood, and tears of slavery. Each chop of the ax is a beat, each lash of the whip fashions another line on the musical staff. But each sound also creates the chords and harmonies that preserve the ancestors and their stories, and sustain life, faith, and hope into our own times.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 96 pages

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Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #640,493 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Music > History #841 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Multicultural #1015 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > African-American

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Gr 5 Up-This exquisite collection of poems and paintings celebrates the history and culture of blues music. Adoff traces the horrific journey of slaves to America and the role that music played as a means of survival, of passing on "the ancestor words." Even as the lyrics describe harsh realities, the innate beauty of music made with sticks, spoons, or whatever was at hand speaks of an irrepressible hope: "Under the hot sun: the chop chop/hoe/measures out the beats of freedom." Christie's haunting acrylic images bring to life the drama and emotion of the music, as well as the dignity of his subjects. In the latter half of the book, Adoff introduces blues performers Bessie Smith, Lonnie Johnson, Son House, Ma Rainey, Robert Johnson, Johnny Lee Hooker, B. B. King, and

Muddy Waters, stepping down on the "Chicago/train/station/platform/with a suitcase/of Mississippi River/with a suitcase/of Mississippi/Delta with a suitcase of Mississippi/dripping/on side/walk/s." As with Walter Dean Myers and Christopher Myers's *Blues Journey* (Holiday House, 2003), this splendid addition to American history units should resonate with a wide audience. Adoff comes full circle with this stirring poem: "And we have always sung about hearts and healing/broken pieces into new and beating creations when/eyes open to first light of morning sun shining/in my back door/shining/in my back door./Shining/shining:/Always."-Marilyn Taniguchi, Beverly Hills Public Library, CA (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

**\*Starred Review\*** Celebrated children's poet Adoff here offers nothing less than a sensory history of the blues. In short poems and prose vignettes, he traces the roots of song and rhythm as they are passed down and shaped through collective memories, experiences, visions, and sounds across oceans, on plantations, up and down the Mississippi, in chain gangs and back rooms, and finally on the main stage as a celebrated, uniquely American art form. Christie provides arresting and soul-stirring paintings that echo the poems here and add texture and harmony there, but Adoff's poems are themselves things to be savored visually as well as out loud. It's not necessarily concrete poetry, but the placement of words on the page and even the spacing of the letters within the words stretch and contract like deep breaths across the lines, lending sustain and staccato accents to the language. In *Muddy Waters Steps Down*, the words form a rough outline of Illinois up top and Louisiana down below as the bluesman arrives in Chicago. Many of the poems, though, are not nearly so direct: *Brown fingers moving with the regularity of rhythm / onto stretched skins onto smooth carved wood. / This new world music moves with shackle sounds.* These are fleeting bits of sound and slippery-to-grasp flashes of imagery that, like song, are meant to evoke more than inform, and they come with generations' worth of weight and rhythm. Grades 4-8. --Ian Chipman

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