

Song of My Life: A Biography of Margaret Walker

By Carolyn J. Brown

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Margaret Walker (1915–1998) has been described as “the most famous person nobody knows.” This is a shocking oversight of an award-winning poet, novelist, essayist, educator, and activist as well as friend and mentor to many prominent African American writers. *Song of My Life* reintroduces Margaret Walker to readers by telling her story, one that many can relate to as she overcame certain obstacles related to race, gender, and poverty.

Walker was born in 1915 in Birmingham, Alabama, to two parents who prized education above all else. Obtaining that education was not easy for either her parents or herself, but Walker went on to earn both her master’s and doctorate from the University of Iowa. Walker’s journey to become a nationally known writer and educator is an incredible story of hard work and perseverance. Her years as a public figure connected her to Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Alex Haley, and a host of other important literary and historical figures.

This biography opens with her family and those who inspired her?her parents, her grandmother, her most important teachers and mentors?all significant influences on her reading and writing life. Chapters trace her path over the course of the twentieth century as she travels to Chicago and becomes a member of the South Side Writers’ Group with Richard Wright. Then she is accepted into the newly created Masters of Fine Arts Program at the University of Iowa. Back in the South, she pursued and achieved her dream of becoming a writer and college educator as well as wife and mother. Walker struggled to support herself, her sister, and later her husband and children, but she overcame financial hardships, prejudice, and gender bias and achieved great success. She penned the acclaimed novel *Jubilee* , received numerous lifetime achievement awards, and was a beloved faculty member for three decades at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi.

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Editorial Review

Review

“*Song of My Life: A Biography of Margaret Walker* is a beautifully written portrait of one of the great figures in southern literature. Margaret Walker excelled as a writer, teacher, and mother during her long, productive life. Carolyn Brown offers a unique window on Walker and helps us understand both her struggles and her impressive achievements.”

?William R. Ferris, author of *The Storied South: Voices of Writers and Artists*

“Carolyn Brown’s biography of Margaret Walker is a rich and timely addition to the scholarship and general public appreciation and understanding of one of the great American authors of the twentieth century. Over the course of her life and career, Margaret Walker produced indelible literary creations like her award-winning poem ‘For My People’ and her celebrated novel *Jubilee*, but she also stood at the heart of the Black Arts Movement and a nascent Black Studies Movement. As Brown shows us, committed to both the arts and activism, Walker founded the Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People (now named in her honor) at Jackson State University, where she spent thirty years on the faculty, in order to guarantee the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of the African American experience. Passing on the mentorship she received from the likes of Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, Walker lifted a new generation of artists into prominence, from Sonia Sanchez and James Baldwin to Amiri Baraka and Toni Morrison. Now, Brown has helped lift Walker into the national consciousness, where she so richly deserves to belong.”

?Robert Luckett, director of the Margaret Walker Center, Jackson State University

“*Song of My Life* is a timely reminder of Walker’s importance to the South and to the nation in the century that she did not live to see. Opening up discussions that too many might think old-fashioned, like family loyalty and intellectual honesty, for example, Carolyn Brown has given us a book for all ages?sensitively written, preserving the integrity of the subject, and painfully accurate. The documentary format brings us directly to Walker as if she were still with us. I highly recommend this book, especially for anyone who has never heard of Margaret Walker.”

?Maryemma Graham, editor of *Fields Watered with Blood: Critical Essays on Margaret Walker*

About the Author

Carolyn J. Brown, Jackson, Mississippi, is a writer, editor, and independent scholar. She is the author of *A Daring Life: A Biography of Eudora Welty* and has taught at Elon University, the University of North Carolina–Greensboro, and Millsaps College.

Users Review

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Heather Sessoms:

The actual book Song of My Life: A Biography of Margaret Walker will bring someone to the new experience of reading a book. The author style to describe the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book you just read, this book very suited to you. The book Song of My Life: A Biography of Margaret Walker is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can more easily to read the book.

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Whitney Martinez:

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Daniel Metz:

Playing with family inside a park, coming to see the ocean world or hanging out with close friends is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try point that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not feeling tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition details. Even you love Song of My Life: A Biography of Margaret Walker, you can enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout fellas. What? Still don't buy it, oh come on its called reading friends.

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