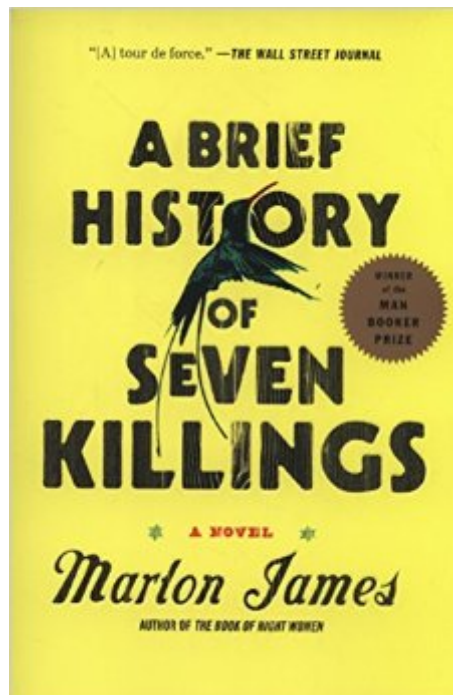


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A Brief History Of Seven Killings: A Novel



Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 Man Booker Prize
A recipient of the 2015 American Book Award
One of the Top 10 Books of 2014
“ Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times* A *New York Times* Book Review
Notable Book Named a best book of the year by: *The New York Times* *Chicago Tribune* *The Washington Post* *The Boston Globe* *Time Newsweek* *The Huffington Post* *The Seattle Times* *The Houston Chronicle* *Publishers Weekly* *Library Journal* *Popsugar* *BookPage* *BuzzFeed* *Books Salon* *Kansas City Star* *L Magazine* A “thrilling, ambitious . . . intense” • (*Los Angeles Times*)
novel that explores the attempted assassination of Bob Marley in the late 1970s. In *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, Marlon James combines masterful storytelling with his unrivaled skill at characterization and his meticulous eye for detail to forge a novel of dazzling ambition and scope. On December 3, 1976, just before the Jamaican general election and two days before Bob Marley was to play the Smile Jamaica Concert to ease political tensions in Kingston, seven unnamed gunmen stormed the singer’s house, machine guns blazing. The attack wounded Marley, his wife, and his manager, and injured several others. Little was officially released about the gunmen, but rumors abounded regarding the assassins’ fates. *A Brief History of Seven Killings* is James’s fictional exploration of that dangerous and unstable time in Jamaica’s history and beyond. Deftly spanning decades and continents and peopled with a wide range of characters—assassins, drug dealers, journalists, and even ghosts—James brings to life the people who walked the streets of 1970s Kingston, who dominated the crack houses of 1980s New York, and who reemerged into a radically altered Jamaica of the 1990s. Brilliantly inventive, *A Brief History of Seven Killings* is an “exhilarating” • (*The New York Times*) epic that’s been called “a tour de force” • (*The Wall Street Journal*).

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Customer Reviews

This was probably the most challenging novel I've read in several years. Who am I kidding? There's no probably about it. Marlon James has constructed an incredibly complex story, and it took every bit of memory available to me to keep up. He was kind enough to include a cast of characters, but I made it a point to refer to it as little as possible, opting instead to try and follow the story under my own power. Add to the story's complexity the fact that most of the characters are from the ghettos of Kingston, and speak in a patois that takes some serious acclimation initially, and will slow your reading speed to a crawl at times. Amazingly though, after spending nearly a week with these characters, I felt like I had picked up the meanings quite well and could read those sections much quicker. Strangely, for me, this adaptation was the most rewarding aspect of this particular reading experience. In fact, as much respect as I now have for Marlon James' talent, I have to admit that I did not actually enjoy this novel, and found it made for an almost constantly uncomfortable reading experience. The last time I felt the inability to enjoy such a well written book, I was reading *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*, a Pulitzer finalist. Both books require the reader to spend most of their time in very difficult places. By difficult I mean places where innocents suffer a great deal of agony and injustice, and both books left me feeling a certain hopelessness from which I felt the reader was never released. That may well be James' intention, and the fact that he could take me to such places and make them feel so real as to make me uncomfortable is a testament to his talents.

Jamaica is a mother who eats her children. If there's a message to this rich, complicated, wholly satisfying novel, that's it. Everyone preys on the poor in Kingston, Jamaica, and the only way out is to prey on others. That's what almost all the characters in this vast, sprawling saga do — "they savage their neighbors for their own gain and then they too fall before other more savage, or merely younger, predators. Life is short, harsh, and violent in Kingston. No one leaves the game unmarked. In the ghetto there is no such thing as peace. There is only this fact. Your power to kill me can only be stop by my power to kill you . . . Who want peace anyway when all that mean is that you still poor?" Crime and politics are pretty much the same game in Kingston. The novel starts before the 1976 election campaign. The island's biggest celebrity, Bob Marley, or "the Singer" as he's referred to throughout the novel, has returned to headline a big Peace Concert. Everyone's there. Mick Jagger and the Stones — "Mick out hunting for black poon. A freelancer

for Rolling Stone. (Heâ™s one of the narrators.) Everyone. Some of them want the Singer dead. They almost succeed. (This is historically accurate. There was an almost successful attempt to assassinate Marley before the concert in 1976.) Afterward, thereâ™s a bloodbath scourging of the ranks of the conspirators so that the little fish canâ™t spill the beans on the bigger ones. The description of what happens is savage, visceral, jolting. Thereâ™s no room for gratitude or kindness in a world this poor, especially when the stakes are high. Time moves on. Itâ™s 1978, 1979, the 80s and 1991.

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