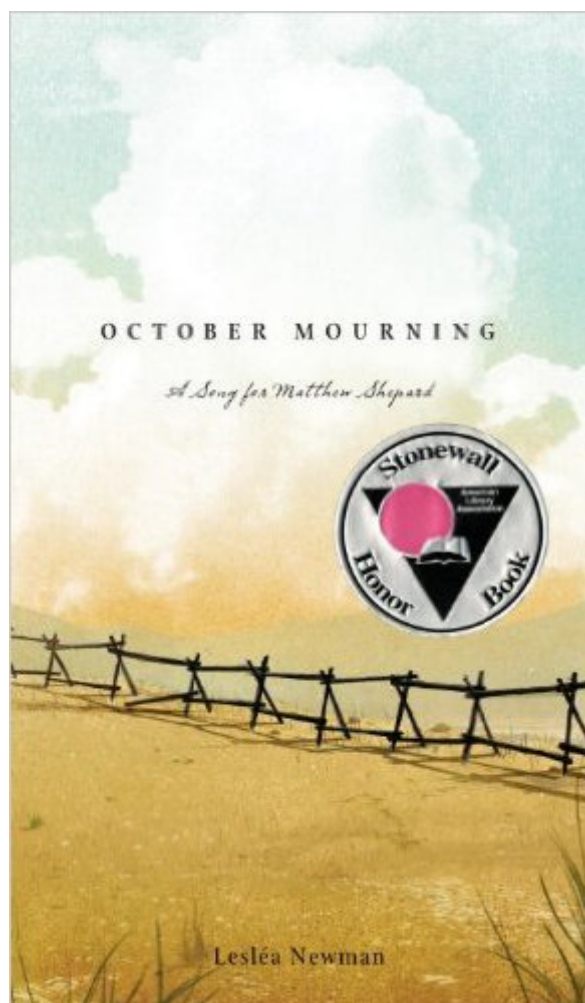


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October Mourning: A Song For Matthew Shepard



Synopsis

WINNER OF A 2013 STONEWALL HONOR! A masterful poetic exploration of the impact of Matthew Shepard's murder on the world. On the night of October 6, 1998, a gay twenty-one-year-old college student named Matthew Shepard was lured from a Wyoming bar by two young men, savagely beaten, tied to a remote fence, and left to die. Gay Awareness Week was beginning at the University of Wyoming, and the keynote speaker was Lesléa Newman, discussing her book *Heather Has Two Mommies*. Shaken, the author addressed the large audience that gathered, but she remained haunted by Matthew's murder. *October Mourning*, a novel in verse, is her deeply felt response to the events of that tragic day. Using her poetic imagination, the author creates fictitious monologues from various points of view, including the fence Matthew was tied to, the stars that watched over him, the deer that kept him company, and Matthew himself. More than a decade later, this stunning cycle of sixty-eight poems serves as an illumination for readers too young to remember, and as a powerful, enduring tribute to Matthew Shepard's life.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (23 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Matthew Shepard was a 21 year-old University of Wyoming student who was beaten, tortured, tied to a fence and left to die, exposed to the cold in rural Wyoming. The crime was motivated by hate: the two men who murdered him killed him because he was gay. I grew up not far from where Shepard died; it is revolting to me that people I know could do such a thing, and I sometimes struggle with understanding not only the brutality of the crime, but also the lack of compassion exhibited in the weeks following. *October Mourning* gave me some perspective on this; it also

gave me hope: there are people of conscience and compassion just as there are those who irrationally hate. Newman's poems about the murder of Matthew Shepard and the subsequent trial and responses by others is incredible for so many reasons: first and foremost, her poetry is beautiful, haunting and powerful - at several points in reading her work, tears were brought to my eyes. The variety of poetry is also incredible: she writes in pantoums, villanelles, rhyming couplets, free-verse, haiku, list poems and several other forms of poetry with which I was previously unfamiliar (a glossary and explanation is provided at the back.) The variety of perspectives are incredible: Newman shows (as only poetry can) the perspective of the fence to which Shepard was tied and left to die; of the bartender who let Shepard leave with the two murderers; of the girlfriends of the murderers, the prosecuting and defense attorneys, of the public, of Shepard's parents. The organization and presentation of the poetry is incredible.

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