

Hello, and thanks for joining us for our Read To Me series from the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library. My name is Carmen Greenlee. I'm the Humanities and Media Librarian.

And today, I'd like to start the program with a poem by Marilyn Nelson. It is included in this anthology, "Every Shut Eye Ain't Asleep," which was co-edited by our own Anthony Walton. It is an anthology of poetry by African-American poets since 1945. Professor Nelson is a retired professor of English at the University of Connecticut. She's a Guggenheim fellow and a finalist for the National Book Award. She writes a lot about families and about jazz. And I would very much recommend her Tuskegee Airmen Sequence if you'd like to dip into her work. This poem is called "My Grandfather Walks In The Woods."

Somewhere in the light above the womb, black trees and white trees populate a world. It is a March landscape. The only birds around are small and black. What do they eat, sitting in the birches like warnings? The branches of the trees are black and white. Their race is winter. They thrive in cold. There is my grandfather, walking among the trees. He does not notice his fingers are cold. His black felt hat covers his eyes. He is knocking on each tree, listening to their voices as they answer slowly deep, deep from their roots. "I am John," he says. "Are you my father?" They answer with voices like wind blowing away from him.

That was "My Grandfather Walks In The Woods" by Marilyn Nelson. We hope you'll join us for more readings in this series. Be well.

Transcript by [Rev.com](https://www.rev.com)