



The Day I Saw the Hummingbird: A Novel

Paulette Mahurin

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On the eve of his tenth birthday, a young slave's life is turned upside down. The unthinkable events that led up to the day Oscar Mercer saw a hummingbird test the limits of this young boy's body, mind and soul. Gripped with fear and filled with anger, Oscar faces raw, crushing hatred aimed at him and everyone he loves. In a time when a nation was ripped apart geographically, economically, politically and morally, comes a story of a courageous boy who began life as a slave on a sugarcane plantation in Louisiana and escapes via the Underground Railroad. Through the efforts and good will of kind, brave people determined to free slaves, Oscar faces devastating obstacles and dangers. Struggling with his inner impulse to seek revenge for the injustices and violence levied on his family and friends, he discovers that in bondage you pray to God, but in freedom, you meet Him. From the award-winning, best-selling author of *The Seven Year Dress* comes a story that brings another cadre of memorable characters alive on pages that pulse with hatred and kindness, cruelty and compassion, despair and hope. Oscar's journey on the Underground Railroad is a heart-pounding ride that the reader will remember long after this story ends.

The Day I Saw the Hummingbird: A Novel Details

Date : Published September 2017 by Early Girl Enterprisers, LLC

ISBN :

Author : Paulette Mahurin

Format : Kindle Edition 363 pages

Genre : Fiction

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From Reader Review The Day I Saw the Hummingbird: A Novel for online ebook

Linda Greene says

Do you want to fall in love? Get your copy of Paulette Mahurin's "The Day I Saw the Hummingbird," and I guarantee that you will fall head over heels in love with Oscar, Mahurin's very young Negro slave who is the center of this story. Mahurin has outdone herself with this novel; among her extraordinary literary achievements, this is her best, in my opinion. I do not rest on my laurels, however, because I know she will wow her readers yet again. "The Day I Saw the Hummingbird" will be hard to top, however. With time, it just might prove to be her masterpiece.

Ian Welch says

The day I saw the Hummingbird is an enthralling tale highlighting the tortuously cruel treatment of slaves in the southern states of America pre-civil war days. It is told through the eyes of Oscar, a young negro born in captivity and facing a lifetime of unspeakable hardship.

Whilst it is a novel, it is built around factual happenings, at times resembling a lesson in history. I found it impossible to read without choking with emotion as Oscar struggles to cope with tumultuous events that scar his young life. The reader lives his pain, fears, and desperation as he travels his dangerous journey to freedom.

This is a story that grabs the reader, compelling them to turn the next page, hoping against hope that Oscar will come through his harrowing ordeal.

Henk-Jan van der Klis says

Four previous books by Paulette Mahurin I read and reviewed before I was notified by the author on the upcoming release of The Day I Saw The Hummingbird. The hummingbird turns out to be the harbinger of bad news to Oscar, born from two slaves on a sugarcane plantation in Louisiana on the eve of the Civil War. Mr. Prescott, the plantation owner, shot Oscar's father to death and raped his mother several times. His cruelty towards little Oscar is somewhat limited by the help Oscar's mother provided Prescott's wife, With other slaves a plan to escape the plantation is worked out. A small bundle of slaves, among which the ten-year-old Oscar succeeded in escaping but with heavy losses along the Underground Railroad network towards states that are friendlier towards black people.

Added to the narrative are Oscar's struggles with injustice and hate, and the power of language. Oscar was lucky to learn reading and writing at a young age and was helped to improve these skills in New York City where he arrived after an adventurous journey. Although the latter part of the story is told in a more summarized, condensed way compared to the years of slavery and the first part of the escape and stay in a safe house. The novel is a fine work of writing with a touch of limit linguistic capabilities of (former) slaves, and the point of view of a young boy haunted by man-made demons.

Malia says

This is my third book by Mahurin and as with her others, I was not disappointed. This time she turns to another very tragic time in history, telling the story of a boy in slavery, Oscar Mercer. The setting is so well illustrated, though it was very difficult to read about the terrible suffering and cruel circumstances the enslaved men and women had to endure. Mahurin shines a light on an individual character's plight, which really represents the misery of a whole group of marginalized and abused people. Still, there is hope, too. Some people are cruel, but some are kind and offer Oscar a helping hand as he tried to find freedom through the Underground Railway. There is, as with the author's previous books, a great sense of humanity and intimacy with the protagonist, which made me feel immediately invested in his story and really feel for him and all he had to endure. This is a truly moving story that deserves to be read.

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Rebecca says

Another fine example of history brought to life. The book is filled with words of wisdom about life and endurance--not only for slaves seeking freedom, but also for those never bound by the chains of slavery. In a world filled with hatred, this book gives hope for a way to stop perpetuating the violence. The writing and characters will touch your heart.

The essence of the story can be summed up in a quote from the book:

"...the heavy burden a mother carries over witnessing the daily oppressions, hardships, and horrors on her child and all the children caught up in the miseries of life. This was no life for any human being, let alone a child."

Johanna Craven says

I've read several of Paulette Mahurin's books and really enjoyed them all, but The Day of the Hummingbird truly blew me away. The writing is beautiful and the story gripping and immensely powerful. Oscar's moving story is told through evocative imagery and prose and the characters are so real they stir up plenty of emotion. This is not an easy read but it's a very important one. It's a book I won't soon forget.

Gordon Bickerstaff says

Historical fiction at its very best

The author sets the milieu for this historical fiction with this Harriet Tubman quote 'Slavery is the next thing to hell', and this book pulls no punches in its poignant description of the daily hardships endured in this way of life. In 2017, slavery still exists but it's not in the public face, it's small scale and it's hidden. In 1852, it was a way of life for a great many people. This story, seen through the eyes of a Congolese descendent, Oscar, as he grows from infant to adult, is an incredible journey of endurance on the treacherous road to freedom. Given the life Oscar comes from, his development and reflections are inspirational. The story is well balanced with acts of human cruelty to reveal the hell of slavery and acts of human kindness to fuel

hope for freedom. Writing is engaging and compassionate with real heart and emotion flowing from the pages. Visualisation is striking, characters are believable and correctly set in their situation, and the story unfolds at a steady pace. A well-written, well-researched and compelling story. Highly recommended.

Connie Lacy says

Confronting man's inhumanity to man is painful – no two ways about it. But this book, which reads like a heartfelt memoir by a real black man looking back on his life as a slave and his escape to freedom, also focuses on goodness and human warmth. The author has put a lot of heart into her characters. Young Oscar sees terrible abuses by the truly evil plantation overseer, yet he manages to continue to believe in God and the value of life. Despite horrible treatment and the brutal murder of her husband, Oscar's mother instills in her son faith, hope and a belief in himself as a valuable human being.

The author obviously did a lot of research about slavery and the Underground Railroad, which she uses to infuse this novel with realism.

Kudos to her for shining a light on this shameful chapter in American history while also creating memorable characters who maintain their humanity despite the horrors of slavery.

Fiona says

I absolutely loved this harrowing yet endearing tale of a young slave's journey to freedom.

If you want to discover a fresh indie author with amazing talent then take a look at this one. The fact all profits go to an animal shelter is an added bonus.

I was completely enthralled by the read and impressed with how the author told the authentic story through the eyes of a young boy, never once slipping out of character. Oscar experiences and witnesses great cruelty and violence but this is balanced by the generous and brave people who helped him on his journey.

Fantastic book. Highly recommend.

Grant Leishman says

Anyone who has read my reviews over the years will know I am a big fan of Historical Fiction. I have a few indie authors whose works I treasure and who I absolutely love reading. One of these authors is Paulette Mahurin. She has the ability to move you to tears, whilst still managing to make you chuckle at some odd coincidence of her character's. When I realised she had a new book out, well, I absolutely knew I had to read it. The Day I Saw the Hummingbird is something totally different from what I had read of Mahurin's before and yet it still had that indefinable quality of her writing that captures the imagination and draws the reader into her world.

The Day I Saw the Hummingbird follows the adventures and life of Oscar, a young, black, slave in the heartlands of Louisiana around the time of the Civil War. Oscar and his mother dream of freedom and a life of dignity and learning, but when Oscar's mother is brutally beaten at the hands of a drunken and violent overseer, it is time for the then nine-year-old Oscar to leave and seek the famous "underground railway" to the North and to freedom. Mahurin captures beautifully the times and the attitudes of the South in those days.

Her descriptions of the trials and tribulations faced by the young man and the angst and pain he suffers, internally, at the treatment of his people, just because their skin is a different colour, is both moving and heartfelt. One couldn't help but be drawn into Oscar's world and feel the horrors faced by just a little boy and the courage required to survive on that long and arduous journey.

The book is written from the perspective of an elderly Oscar, in 1910, looking back at those times and reflecting, sadly, that in many ways, certainly in the South, little had changed since he'd made the long journey. One could even extrapolate and say in 2017, some things still haven't changed in the South of the United States. I know there has been some controversy in recent times about only "African Americans" can tell the "African American Story". Whilst I can respect some of the sentiment behind those thoughts, I am glad that Mahurin and others do not subscribe to this theory. As writers we must push the boundaries of our cultural and socio-economic experiences and embrace the pain and suffering of all humanity and point out injustice where we see it. It is what we do! And Mahurin does it superbly. Pain, suffering, injustice, love, friendship and all of the other myriad of human emotions do not belong to and are not confined or identifiable to a particular culture, but are shared across all of humanity and are what binds us together and makes us one race - the Human Race.

I applaud Mahurin for having the courage to write this wonderful story and as always I finish one of her books satisfied and full of thought and follow-up questions. A writer who can do this for a reader is to be celebrated and I place Paulette Mahurin right up there among the very best indie authors (or indeed any authors) out there. There was never any question of my rating for this book - 5+ superb stars all the way.

Lynda Dickson says

The book begins and ends in 1914, when Oscar Mercer attends a talk given by Booker T. Washington honoring Harriet Tubman, the woman responsible for coordinating the Underground Railway and, therefore, securing Oscar's freedom.

Oscar reminisces about his life, from his birth in 1852 into a life of slavery until the time he gains his freedom, aged ten. As a child, he stands by helplessly as friends and family members suffer the cruelty inflicted by the plantation's foreman. When he is five, the slaves start hearing tales of "a Negro woman who was working with a group to help free slaves." That woman is Harriet Tubman. We never meet her, but her presence runs through the narrative. Another milestone in Oscar's life is when he gets the opportunity to learn how to read and write. He is drawn to comment, "Why do learning things feel so good?" Then, on the day he sees the hummingbird in the field, a chain of events is set into motion that ends in tragic consequences but eventually leads to his freedom. Armed with a Bible, a dictionary, and the skills taught to him by "conductors" with the Underground Railway, Oscar finally makes it to freedom. It is a gruelling journey from Louisiana to New York City, during which his faith is tested and he learns the true meaning of freedom.

Throughout, Oscar maintains his spirit and resolve by recalling his mother's words of wisdom: "My mama's womb had given me life, but it was her wisdom implanted in my brain that kept me alive." She imbues in him the belief that "Skin color don't make us no less a person." This belief is reinforced when he meets the many (white) people who are willing to help him on his trip along the Underground Railway: "I was overwhelmed with relief when I realized that people are people. Simple as that. And the color of my skin doesn't make me less of a person. It doesn't separate or define my humanness. No, what makes some less human is hatred and hateful actions."

In the Foreword, the author gives us some background into how she came to write this story: “In many southern states, educating slaves to read or write was illegal. [...] I incorporated the element of educating slaves into this story and, in particular, with the protagonist and narrator of the story. [...] Many of the scenes depicted were adapted from historical notes, letters, and other documentation from slaves who lived to tell their stories.” She succeeds admirably in giving us a look into the psyche of the young slave Oscar and rendering a heartbreaking account of the atrocities committed in the name of greed and prejudice.

Oscar’s story will haunt you for a long time after you have finished reading.

I received this book in return for an honest review.

Full blog post (30 March): <https://booksdirectonline.blogspot.co...>

Bill Ward says

I love this author's books and this is another great read. In places I found it hard to read about the terrible suffering of the slaves working on a plantation at the time of the American civil war but that is only because of the authentic nature of the writing. Slavery was an abomination and the story traces the history of a boy born into slavery and his family. The suffering endured is difficult to comprehend but history shows that mankind has repeatedly demonstrated its cruelty right up to current times. The characters and settings are brought vividly to life in a story packed with suspense. A book full of life lessons without preaching. Highly recommended!

J. Schlenker says

The symbolism of the hummingbird in this book about slavery was a brilliant choice by the author, Paulette Mahurin. Some of the meanings attributed to the hummingbird are independence, lifting up negativity, resiliency, and being able to travel great distances tirelessly. These all certainly go with the theme as I interpreted it as Oscar, a small boy suffers the life of slavery on a sugarcane plantation in Louisiana, losing all he cared about there, and after the death of his mother embarks on a journey to freedom via the Underground Railroad. Along the way, his thoughts are tormented by the cruelty of the overseer he left behind, while juxtaposed by feelings of hope in the kindness of strangers who help him toward his goal. And finally, the color of the hummingbird, green, represents healing. I have been interested in the subject of slavery for a good deal of my life, having actually met someone born into slavery when I was very young. Seeing this woman, a piece of our history is forever engrained in my mind and my heart. I think we are still very much in the healing process of this era of our history. Ms. Mahurin's book offers both insights and hope with regard to our past, present, and future.

Wanda Hartzenberg says

This as usual was an exceptional book by one of my favourite authors. A boy growing into a man, a man who has all the right in the world to hate but is taught and learns the lesson well that hating is a self-defeating act.

Amazing to me is how the author while giving every character his or her own unique voice still stays true to the central message of the book -We are all human, we all bleed red.
This is a book about suffering, loss, courage and triumph. Of the human will and the human spirit that is not contained by age. By race. By gender.
Read this book. I am sure everybody will take something else from it. And even if you don't then you at least have a good read for an hour or four.

E.M. McIntyre says

Though the heavy subject matter of The Day I Saw The Hummingbird makes it a difficult read, I could not put this book down. Oscar's journey to freedom, while he not only flees for his life but battles his own inner hatred toward his oppressors, is beautifully written and filled with so many truthful passages. A line that resonated most for me was, "...my thoughts and feelings are the invisible chains shackling me...". A beautiful piece that all should read.
