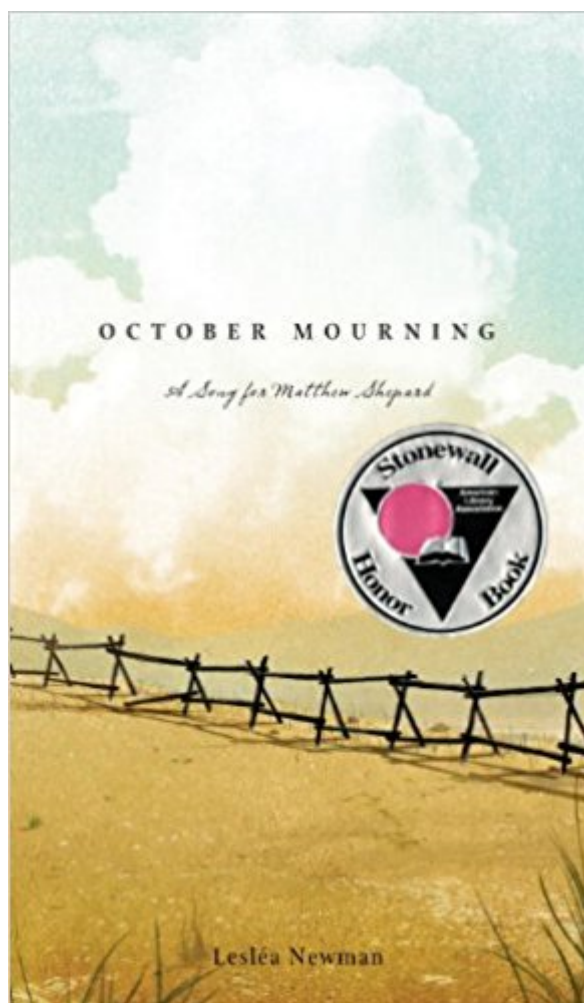


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# October Mourning: A Song For Matthew Shepard



## 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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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** On October 6, 1998, 21-year-old Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming, was lured into a truck, driven into the country, savagely beaten, tied to a fence, and left to die—which he did, five days later. In the 68 poems that make up this novel-in-verse, Newman re-creates the events and circumstances surrounding this unspeakably vile hate crime and offers a moving tribute to a young man she regards as a martyr. Her poems are told from multiple points of view, including that of the fence, the rope that bound the boy, and a doe that

stood watch over him. The beautifully realized selections are also written in a variety of forms, ranging from haiku to villanelle, from concrete poetry to rhymed couplets. Each form (discussed in an appendix) matches the tone and mood of its content, creating an almost musical effect that is both intellectually and aesthetically engaging. Written with love, anger, regret, and other profound emotions, this is a truly important book that deserves the widest readership, not only among independent readers but among students in a classroom setting, as well. Most importantly, the book will introduce Matthew Shepard to a generation too young to remember the tragic circumstances of his death. Grades 8-12. --Michael Cart

"This is the one book I've reviewed so far this year that I believe must be read by everyone ages 14 and up. It takes less than an hour to read; but it will likely stay with the reader for a long time to come. Highly recommended for both YA and adult poetry collections." -- Ingram News and Reviews for the Youth Librarian  
Written with love, anger, regret, and other profound emotions, this is a truly important book that deserves the widest readership, not only among independent readers but among students in a classroom setting, as well. Most importantly, the book will introduce Matthew Shepard to a generation too young to remember the tragic circumstances of his death. --Booklist (starred review)

I love this one. I am a visual artist and do not express myself with words very well. That's one of the reasons I enjoy reading is finding beauty in words and the storytelling. The foreshadowing and mood setting with word choice. This is a different but beautiful art form. Poetry with iambic pentameter and rhyme schemes that I cannot figure out make it hard for me to get the beauty of the roll, the stops of the word. Concrete poems I understand, dual voice poems check, Haikus gotcha. But when it is important to a verse novel for me to understand the rhyming pattern and the emphasis of words, I feel like I lose some of the beauty reading gives me since I miss out on emphasis that I can later going back understand was foreshadowing to set the mood. This book uses multiple types of poetry to tell basically a single point of view of someone or something that was present of affected by this hate crime. And while some do have the elements I don't like, the author has given an index of the poems numbered and described how the poem works in its place and what kind of poem it is. I recommend waiting till the end to look for ones you don't understand. It might breakup the thoughts and flows between poems. So, this verse novel gives the events of a tragic murder of a gay boy named Matthew Shepard. It begins before he is killed, what he is thinking about in the club, when he is beaten and tied to a fencepost and ultimately dies. Multiple viewpoints are given

throughout the book. What the stars saw, what the mothers of others felt for their sons. The fence that so sadly had to hold him up... And the mourning and fall out from a murder of hate. The sentencing, the hate-groups that agree...It's deeply moving. interweaving different stories like yarn into a coherent start to finish book of what happened that night to the aftermath for the boy, his family, his killers, the community, and the LGBTQ community.

I want to thank Lauren S. for this wonderful gift to our library and with it her advice that it is a must read for young adults. I wholeheartedly concur; in 68 poems in this spare, yet piercing novel in verse, the author was scheduled to speak at Matthew Shepard's college and found out just before about the savage beating this young man received. Leslea Newman kept her keynote engagement and spoke and wept at the sheer horror of this hate crime toward an innocent victim who succumbs to death 5 days later. Newman has taken many elements of Matthew Shepard's last hours and imagined what may have been; the road, the fence he was lashed to, the biker, the murderers, the pistol, the deer and so much more. This book is a tribute to Matthew Shepard who died as a result of a hate crime at the hands of gay haters. This book is also a history lesson that every child, young adult and reader needs to explore because in the reading of this book, you will be changed. This book needs to be read by everyone. I especially gained even more knowledge through the author's introduction, her epilogue, her afterword, notes, explanation of poetic forms and resources. Newman brings sympathy, anger, sorrow, and compassion to each and every word in this book. Highly recommended.

Newman's diary of poems runs up and down the dial of viewpoints and emotions telling the feeling of many people -- and some other beings and non-beings as well -- surrounding the torture and murder of Matthew Shepard, the young gay student. But here's the deal: These poem spring out of horror, and I would never have purchased the book had I not had the opportunity to look through it first (a friend's copy). One finishes the collection (which can also be read piecemeal) feeling more encouraged and empowered than horrified. Bravo to Newman for accomplishing the impossible and demonstrating how something beautiful can come out of something unspeakable.

As someone who does not regularly enjoy poetry outside the kinds of Shel Silverstein, I was hesitant to read *October Mourning*. However, after reading just the first entry I was blown away. Needless to say I finished it in one sitting and since have returned time and time again to re-examine my favorite poems. Newman does an incredible job taking on different perspectives and

it raises the book to another level of creativity and effectiveness. As someone who was very young at the time of Matthew Shepard's death after reading *October Mourning* I was ashamed I had never heard of him. Everyone needs to read this book, whether you like poetry or not, and especially if you do not know Matthew Shepard's story- it is a must!!!

Leslea Newman did a fantastic job of creating numerous poems from different points of view, all surrounding the horrific incident in which two college boys murdered a fellow student, Matthew Shepard, by means of deception, kidnapping, and brutal murder, all because Matthew was gay. Not only is the book creative in its design, but it stands as a device for raising awareness (to all ages) on issues such as LGBTQIA, bigotry/hate crimes, and the ramifications that affect more than just the victims and perpetrators of such ignorant crimes. I highly recommend this book.

Wow. I almost wish I was still teaching so I could use this book during Poetry Month. Not only has Newman written some beautiful poems, but she also used a wide variety of poetic forms and styles. Wow. This book was so amazingly excellent. I'm undecided about whether I should donate this book so others can share in it, or if I should just keep it under my pillow.

Beautifully written words on such a tragic event.

I haven't had a chance to read the book, but Leslea Newman visited my college and did a reading from this book. I was lucky enough to have her sign my copy. It was a very moving book and the imagery is incredible. I highly recommend the book.

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