

Song suggestion: Strange Fruit, Billie Holiday (1939)

[Billie Holiday - "Strange Fruit" Live 1959 \[Reelin' In The Years Archives\]](#)



“Billie Holiday recorded her iconic version of Strange Fruit on 20 April 1939. Eighty years on – in the first of our Songs that Made History series – Aida Amoako explores how a poem about lynching became a timeless call to action.

‘Can you imagine never having heard this song before and realising what the strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees is? That’s something that unfolds in the time of listening, so that image of bulging eyes and twisted mouth jumps out at the listener.’ Cultural critic Emily J Lordi is describing the particular power of a song that still shocks 80 years after it was first performed.

On 20 April 1939, the jazz singer Billie Holiday (born Eleanora Fagan in 1915) stepped into a studio with an eight-piece band to record Strange Fruit. This jarring song about the horrors of lynching was not only Holiday’s biggest hit, but it would become one of the most influential protest songs of the 20th Century – continuing to speak to us about racial violence today.”

Link to the whole article by Aida Amoako, 17th April 2019:

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20190415-strange-fruit-the-most-shocking-song-of-all-time>
(English)

Link zu BR-Podcast “Strange Fruit - Song gegen Lynchmord und Rassismus”:

<https://www.br.de/mediathek/podcast/radiowissen/strange-fruit-song-gegen-lynchmord-und-rassismus/1817022> (Deutsch)