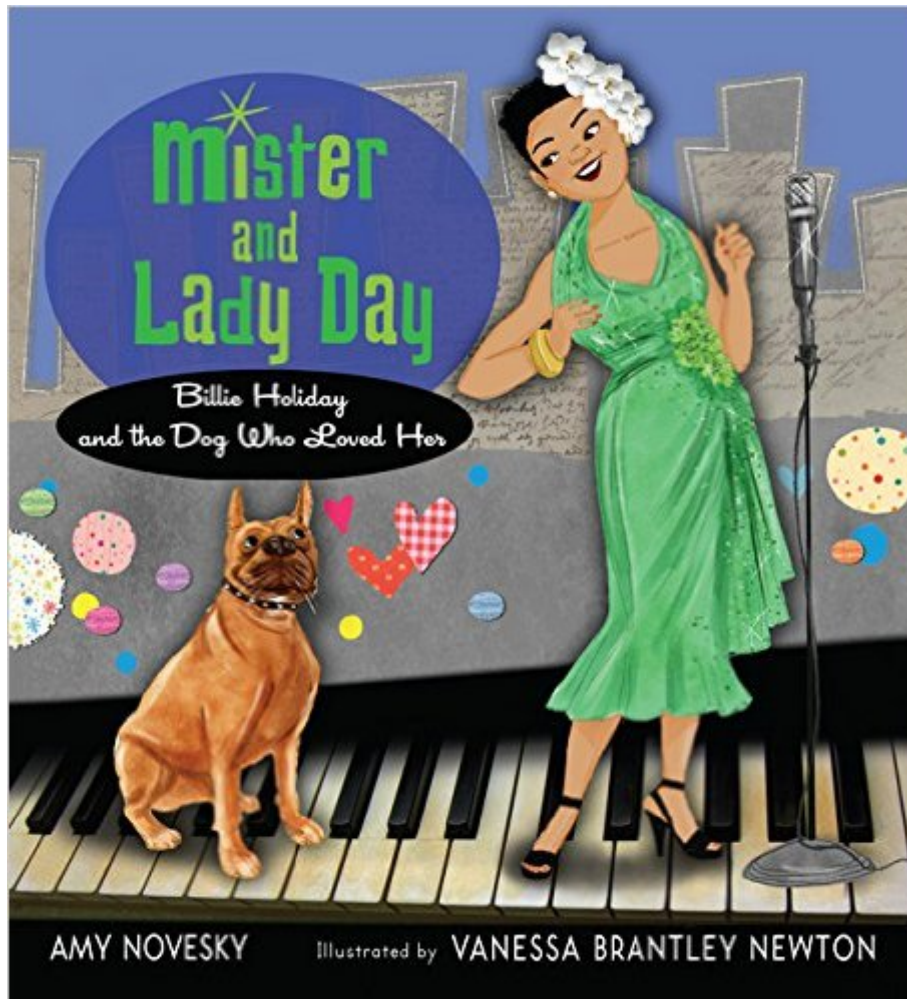


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# Mister And Lady Day: Billie Holiday And The Dog Who Loved Her



## Synopsis

Billie Holiday "also known as Lady Day" had fame, style, a stellar voice, big gardenias in her hair, and lots of dogs. She had a coat-pocket poodle, a beagle, Chihuahuas, a Great Dane, and more, but her favorite was a boxer named Mister. Mister was always there to bolster her courage through good times and bad, even before her legendary appearance at New York's Carnegie Hall. Newton's stylish illustrations keep the simply told story focused on the loving bond between Billie Holiday and her treasured boxer. An author's note deals more directly with the singer's troubled life, and includes a little-known photo of Mister and Lady Day!

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 580L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; 1 edition (June 18, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0152058060

ISBN-13: 978-0152058067

Product Dimensions: 10 x 0.4 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #999,481 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 in [Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Music > Jazz](#) #203 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Performing Arts](#) #247 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Musical](#)

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

At the American Library Association's mid-winter Conference I spotted this new (June 2013) children's book on singer Billie Holiday. It was one of a number of books on black female singers that I discovered. (The others are bios of Ella Fitzgerald and Josephine Baker, both of which I reviewed on this week). Since I often write about early jazz and musical theater, I was very familiar with "Lady Day", the nickname that saxophonist Lester Young gave Holiday. This slim 32-page hardbound volume is the same size as any one of Holiday's 78rpm phonograph records. The "Mister" in the title refers to the name of one of the many dogs that Holiday owned. The first pages show the other dogs and then the author tells us that Mister was the one who was in the

wings during many of her performances. There is little about her early life and soon the author tells us the "Lady Day had to go away and Mister could not come with her". She returned after more than a year. She then makes her first (after her return) at Carnegie Hall and there is Mister in the wings. Well that's the story that any child you give the book to will read or hear if you are reading it to them. But, that's not the whole or true story. Doesn't the reader want to know where or why she went away? For that you will need to turn to the last page "Biography" where you will learn (but I already knew) that Holiday was a drug addict (though one with an amazing voice) and was sentenced to prison for drug possession. Not only that, but the author admits that there is no record of Mister ever being in attendance at the Carnegie Hall concert! So what we have here is a wonderfully illustrated book which will appeal to dog lovers and may introduce children to a jazz icon.

Amy Novesky's most recent picture book, *Mister and Lady Day*, is a lyrical ode to jazz great Billie Holiday and her pet dogs. This is Amy's fourth book on prominent female figures in cultural history; she has also penned *Me, Frida* (on artist Frida Kahlo), *Georgia in Hawaii* (on artist Georgia O'Keeffe), *Imogen* (on photographer Imogen Cunningham). She is currently working on a picture book on sculptor Louise Bourgeois. Billie Holiday's tragic life, which included working as a prostitute, living in a workhouse with her mother, drug addiction, a prison sentence, and more, might not seem like a natural fit for a picture book for young children, and indeed, this side of Holiday's life does not appear in Novesky's book. Novesky focused instead on Holiday's love for her many dogs, and in particular for her boxer named Mister. Love for a dog, of course, is a theme that children identify easily with, as do many adults (OK, I'm a sucker for a good dog story). We first meet Billie Holiday as a young girl, dreaming of being a star, singing on a borrowed gramophone. Illustrator Vanessa Brantley Newton, whose charming illustrations are done with gouache and charcoal with collage elements, depicts Billie in a beautiful setting on a fancy chair, dressed up with a bow in her hair (perhaps a bit fanciful given the realities of her childhood!). The next spread shows her already a star, the great Lady Day. (Illustrated 2-page spreads from the book can be seen on Novesky's website). Novesky introduces a note of melancholy in the text from the beginning, by explaining that even stars need someone to listen to them, and that's the role Lady Day's dogs played.

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