

NERO

BOOK AWARDS

Reading Guides

Children's Fiction Shortlist

Wild Song by Candy Gourlay



Candy Gourlay is a Filipino author based in London. Her debut novel *Tall Story* won the Crystal Kite Prize for Europe and the National Book Award in the Philippines. It was nominated for the Carnegie Medal and shortlisted for 13 prizes including the Blue Peter, the Waterstones Prize and the Branford Boase. When she's not blogging, Candy loves taking photographs and making videos.

'This is an unflinching and uncompromising account of womanhood, racism and conformity - as well as simply being a rollicking good read.' - **Children's Fiction judges, 2023 Nero Book Awards**

"But you were magnificent!" Hunt turned to me. 'Magnificent – do you know the word?' He turned to the old ones. 'Kinyo, translate! Tell them she must come to America. Tell them, I am begging them to let her come! Tell them I had no idea your women were hunters too.'"

Set in the early 1900s, *Wild Song* tells the story of Luki, a headstrong teenager, who lives with her tribe, the Bontok, in the mountains of the Philippines. She is the fiercest hunter in her community, better even than her best friend Samkad. Expected to become a wife and a mother, Luki isn't ready to give up her dream of becoming a warrior. When 'American soldier Tom Hunt – who has stayed behind after the U.S. purchases the Philippines as a colony – offers to take Luki to America to be part of the St. Louis World Fair, she jumps at the chance to escape. However, arriving in America after a long and difficult journey, she discovers that instead of embarking on an exciting adventure, she and her companions are expected to humiliate themselves as exhibits in a human zoo, recreating their rituals and customs to entertain the American public. Luki must find a way to stay true to herself as she discovers Hunt's real, even darker motive for transporting her to America.

A thrilling and tragic adventure, *Wild Song* is vividly told from Luki's point of view as she relates her story to the spirit of her dead mother, with Candy Gourlay's writing immersing the reader in the extraordinary narrative.

Based on real events, *Wild Song* describes a dark and little-known chapter of history. Luki's story will inspire while also serving as a reminder of the ways in which people who are viewed as different, and 'less than', continue to be treated with contempt.

Discussion points:

- Which is your favourite character in the novel and why?
- Why do you think Luki chose to go to America with Tom Hunt?
- In the book, we see that lots of different groups of people experience prejudice and racism in America. Do you think that there are any similarities with how people are treated in America, and in the UK, today?