



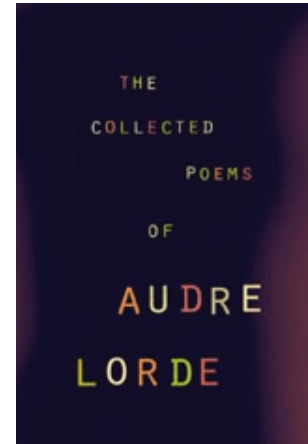
# The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde presented herself as she was. Her poetry reveals the raw human emotion in her life, from having children, to the outstanding crimes being committed in our society. *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde* contain ten volumes of Lorde's poetry, more than 300 poems. They range in length from being quaint four-lined poems, to longer, more detailed, lasting up to several pages. This book also includes early poetry repeatedly appearing later in other volumes, to show revisions made by Lorde.

Audre Lorde lived from 1934-1992. Born in New York, she was the daughter of Caribbean immigrants. She graduated from both Hunter College and Columbia University. She was married for eight years and had two children. She was the first African-American to attend her Catholic elementary school, beginning her fight for equality. She was also homosexual, fascinated by the underground lesbian scene in New York and wrote about this in her poetry. After a 14-year struggle with breast cancer, she died in St. Croix, The Virgin Islands.

Lorde's poetry touches on so many aspects of life, from lesbianism, to black liberation, to encouraging women's empowerment. She's been described as a "black, lesbian, poet," and this pioneering spirit is quite evident in her poetry. It is a graphic offering of a look into her life and life in general for African-American women in the mid-20th century. One of her more powerful poems is "Needed: A Choral of Black Women's Voices," about two specific incidences of murdered black women. Not only does it bring to life the two victims, but it also has Lorde's perspective as a narrator, leader, or reverend of the women. The poem is divided into three "voices," or parts, Lorde's, and one part each for the two murdered women. In her parts she includes how bitter and oppressive these murders become because the victims are African-American women:

*This woman is Black  
so her blood is shed into silence  
this woman is Black  
so her death falls to earth  
like the drippings of birds  
to be washed away with silence and rain.*



Publisher: Norton, 1997



# *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*

## Audre Lorde

Lorde uses very little punctuation, so when poem is read, there are few breaks in, or between lines, which creates a continuous flow of imagery and energy. She also chooses carefully which words will be capitalized. For instance in the above excerpt, Lorde only capitalizes the word “Black.” This emphasizes how important it is that the victims mentioned in the poem are black. Her diction is very powerful as well. “Her blood is shed into silence,” is a evocative metaphor about how little public acknowledgement there is for African-American women murdered. It becomes even more vivid as she compares their blood, or murders, like “drippings of birds,” that are “washed away with silence and rain,” putting a more visual and moving idea on the oppression of these murders. The words she chose to use create an atmosphere that pulls the reader in and forces him or her to keep reading, and no doubt encouraged the progression of the civil rights movement.

Like Maya Angelou, Lorde’s poetry touches generations, past and present, and all people of any race. And, like the songs and poems of Jewel, they are direct, simple and clear. Each has a purpose and message. They highlight issues that are so human, you can feel her energy and passion as she wrote her poems.

All women, especially those looking beyond what is given to us by media, should read Audre Lorde’s poetry. Women still trying to find out who they are and what they believe should also read her works, because they give the reader so much conviction into Lorde’s life, her suffering and power to live her life the way she wanted.

*These days  
when you do say hello I am never sure  
if you are being saucy or experimental or  
merely protecting some new position. Sometimes you gurgle while asleep  
and I know tender places still intrigue you. Now  
when you question me on love  
shall I recommend a dictionary  
or myself?*

*Reviewed by Maggie Qua*