

The Story Behind the First Memorial Day

A children's book tells the story behind the first Memorial Day in 1865, with a new free video of a book reading by the author.

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-- Written by Leah Henderson and illustrated by the late Floyd Cooper and inspired by true events, *A Day for Rememberin'* is the deeply moving story about what is regarded as the first Memorial Day on May 1, 1865 in Charleston, South Carolina.

Leah Henderson told the Children's Book Council (CBC) recently that "A Day for Rememberin' came about because I wanted to share the little-known history of the first community-led observance of Memorial Day--one of our nation's most honored holidays--and the role newly emancipated men, women, and children played in its beginnings. I think it is vital, and I'm sure Floyd would've agreed, that we must search out and highlight overlooked or ignored moments to help fill out our country's history, especially for young readers, in the hope that they will be curious about viewpoints and experiences that may be absent in their own history books."

NEW - Leah Henderson has recorded an exclusive video for [KidLit TV](#), the CBC and [Every Child a Reader](#), reading from *A Day for Rememberin'*.

With poignant prose and celebratory, powerful illustrations, *A Day for Rememberin'* shines a light on the little-known history of this important holiday and reminds us never to forget the people who put their lives on the line for their country.

Published by [ABRAMS books](#), here are reviews from the original publication:

"Cooper's mixed-media illustrations beautifully depict the community's emotions and their actions in creating a memorial. Soft colors gently envelop readers in the story... An enchanting account of the first Memorial Day, this book is recommended for all."—SLJ starred review



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"The moving story, as seen through the eyes of a newly freed boy watching his father and others work hard in anticipation of memorial festivities, is enhanced beautifully by Cooper's illustrations." —Booklist

"Henderson's affecting narrative resonates with reverence, and Cooper's prolific use of muted browns and yellows creates a solemn yet celebratory tone... This worthy title offers another little-known fact about African American contributions that are an imperative part of America's history and traditions."—The Horn Book Magazine

"Oil erasure images by Coretta Scott King Award winner Cooper portray Eli, his family, and their town in images whose power and presence invites lingering views. . . Henderson commemorates the way Eli's Black community remembers a painful piece of history—while honoring the people who experienced it." —Publishers Weekly

Carl Lennertz
Children's Book Council
[email us here](#)

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