



Which Side Are You On?: The Story of a Song

By George Ella Lyon

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Which Side Are You On?: The Story of a Song By George Ella Lyon

Which Side Are You On? tells the story of the classic union song that was written in 1931 by Florence Reece in a rain of bullets. It has been sung by people fighting for their rights all over the world. Florence's husband Sam was a coal miner in Kentucky. Many of the coal mines were owned by big companies, who kept wages low and spent as little money on safety as possible. Miners lived in company houses on company land and were paid in *scrip*, good only at the company store. The company owned the miners sure as sunrise.

That's why they had to have a union. Miners went on strike until they could get better pay, safer working conditions, and health care. The company hired thugs to attack union organizers like Sam Reece.

George Ella Lyon tells this hair-raising story through the eyes of one of Florence's daughters, a dry-witted, pig-tailed gal whose vantage point is from under the bed with her six brothers and sisters. The thugs' bullets hit the thin doors and windows of the company house and the kids lying low wonder whether they're going to make it out of this alive; wonder exactly if this strike will make their lives better or end them, but their mother keeps scribbling and singing. "We need a song," she tells her kids. That's not at all what they think they need. Graphic novelist Christopher Cardinale brings Florence's triumphant story to life in true rip-roaring union style.

Selected as an IRA Notable Book for a Global Society and a 2012 Skipping Stones Honor Book.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The story is a good and important one, and it is well told for an elementary-school audience...Cardinale's folksy, woodcut-style paintings include several memorable images."—**The New York Times**

"What a perfect time for this picture book's arrival..."Which Side Are You On?" is an old song with new relevance for a generation facing a dubious future."

—**NY Journal of Books**

"The story has real power and so do the best of the illustrations."—**Booklist**

"*Which Side Are You On?* is beautiful, lyrical, and important, subtly showing us the importance of music and—even better—how anyone can make a difference, no matter their circumstances, as long as they put their heart and soul into it. A treasure."—**Silas House**, author of *Eli the Good*

"It's a high-stakes account of grace under pressure."—**Publisher's Weekly**

"Cardinale's digitally colored scratchboard art is dynamic...Given that many of the same [labor] conditions exist today, only changed by mechanization, the music and lyrics included may well find use in the current generation. Lyon has given today's readers a stirring story."—**Kirkus Reviews**

"Lyon and Cardinale make a perfect match for this picture-book homage to a 1931 rallying cry born under duress in Harlan County, Ky... Although this book describes a historical event, it can open a gateway to understanding terms such as "collective bargaining," what that right has meant, and to consider what it means today."—**Shelf Awareness**

From the Inside Flap

Front flap:

It's 1931 in the mountains of Kentucky. Under a bed, in a rickety coal-company house, seven kids are hiding. Sam, their daddy, is also hiding, somewhere across the mountain. Outside, men paid by the company are shooting at the windows and walls. Florence, the kids' mother, defends her family with the only weapon she has: words. She is writing a song.

What's going on here? Don't ask me. Let Omie, the oldest, tell it.

Back flap:

George Ella Lyon was raised in Harlan County, Kentucky, where Florence Reece wrote "Which Side Are You On?" The daughter of a dry-cleaner and a community worker, George Ella grew up with one older brother in a house full of music, stories, and books.

Her first ambition was to be a neon sign maker. Much later, she planned to be a folk singer in Greenwich Village. While she chose the path of words, Lyon still writes songs. Recently she was part of Public Outcry, a band performing to make people aware of the ruin caused by mountaintop removal coal mining.

Among Lyon's recent books are *All the Water in the World; The Pirate of Kindergarten*, Schneider Family Book Award winner; and *You and Me and Home Sweet Home*, a Jane Addams Honor Book.

Married to musician/writer Steve Lyon, she lives in Lexington, Kentucky, and has two sons.

Christopher Cardinale had a rootless upbringing following his educator parents through five states from Ohio to New Mexico. Independently, he continued his nomadic life in Guatemala and Mexico, finally settling in Brooklyn, New York. Inspired by Mexican muralism and anarchist punk collectives, Christopher works within marginally defined communities, painting murals whose subjects include the anti-globalization and anti-war movements. His large-scale murals can be viewed in New York, Italy, Greece and Mexico.

He illustrated *Mr. Mendoza's Paintbrush*, by Luis Alberto Urrea. It was chosen by Kirkus Reviews as one of 2010's Best Books for Teens.

From the Back Cover

Come all you poor workers
Good news to you I'll tell
Of how the good old union
Has come in here to dwell.

Which side are you on?
Which side are you on?

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Phyllis Peters:

The book Which Side Are You On?: The Story of a Song gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable much more increase. Book can to become your best friend when you getting strain or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make reading through a book Which Side Are You On?: The Story of a Song to become your habit, you can get far more advantages, like add your own capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. You could know everything if you like wide open and read a guide Which Side Are You On?: The Story of a Song. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science reserve or encyclopedia or some others. So , how do you think about this e-book?

Allen Ellis:

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Joseph Myrick:

Is it you actually who having spare time subsequently spend it whole day by simply watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Which Side Are You On?: The Story of a Song can be the answer, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are therefore out of date, spending your time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a geek activity. So what these books have than the others?

Jesus Curry:

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