



## Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale

*G. Neri*

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When they were younger, Tru and Nelle were best friends, sharing adventures and solving mysteries in Monroeville, Alabama. But then Tru moved to New York City to live his mother and their friendship slowly faded away. Life in the big city wasn't as fun as Tru had hoped it would be. In fact, he ran away, and now he's back and hoping he and Nelle can be friends again.

Unfortunately, things aren't so great in Monroeville, either. Maybe he should have run away to somewhere else.

But Christmas is just around the corner, and there's nothing like the holidays to bring everyone back together.

Based on true events, *Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale* is the continuing story of one of the greatest literary friendships of the 20th century.

“This sequel stands on its own. The writing is gorgeous—not one false stroke. Neri's uneasy peer into a piece of Americana squeezes dribs of hope from precious blood. Totally brilliant. Totally one to watch for in 2017. Bravo!” - Rita Williams-Garcia, 3-time Coretta Scott King Award-Winner and Newbery honoree for *One Crazy Summer*

### Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale Details

Date : Published October 24th 2017 by HMH Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9781328685988

Author : G. Neri

Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Childrens, Middle Grade, Holiday, Christmas, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale for online ebook

### Becky says

First sentence: "Do you think he'll be any taller?" asked Big Boy.

Premise/plot: This is the second book fictionalizing the friendship of Harper Lee and Truman Capote. This one focuses specifically on Christmas--three Christmases to be exact. The first Christmas, readers see a custody battle over Truman. His mother has renamed herself, Nina, and remarried. Joe Capote wants to adopt Truman. Truman's father wants custody, but doesn't want Truman. That is, if he wins, Truman will come to live full-time forever-and-ever with his cousins in Alabama. Nelle is disappointed--as is Big Boy--that the mother wins custody. The second Christmas comprises most of the book--except for the epilogue. In this adventure--or misadventure since Truman thinks he's cursed--Truman has run away from military school. He returns home, but, unfortunately his homecoming is spoiled by a fire that destroys their home. Truman and all of his cousins (minus Callie who has died since Tru & Nelle) move in with Big Boy and his family. (The first story is set in 1935; the second in 1937.) Nelle, Truman, and Big Boy are all older now, will they be just as good as friends as before now that life is more than fun and games? The third Christmas is an epilogue set in New York City in 1956.

My thoughts: I definitely enjoyed reading this holiday-themed coming-of-age story. I enjoyed the characters. In some ways, this is a more emotionally intense read. I would definitely recommend both books.

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### Melissa says

Harper "Nell" Lee and Truman Capote were best friends growing up next door to each other in Monroeville, AL. In December 1935, Tru decides he has had enough of his military school in upstate New York. He runs away a few days before Christmas and takes the train to Sook's home in Monroeville, AL. Sook is his mother's relative who he lived with several years earlier. Tru arrives in the middle of the night and sneaks into his old bedroom. He is soon awakened by a house fire that destroys the house. The family then moves in with Tru's best friend, Big Boy, and his family. Tru feels like he is bad luck especially after getting into an argument with the town bully about the "perfect Christmas Tree".

Nell is now in her middle school ages. Everyone is expecting her to dress like a girl and act like one which she hates. She wonders if Tru has changed since moving to New York. Her father, AC, is a local attorney and brings her to the scene of a grocery store owner. Two black men are accused of murdering him and brought to jail. AC agrees to defend them. Can Nell and Tru's friendship survive as they grow into adults and unsure how to act around each other?

Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale is the second in the middle school series by Coretta Scott Kind award winner, G Neri. The book is told by both Nell and Tru. The events that happened in the book are based on real live events that actually happened between the two. I read that the trial in the book is based loosely on the one in TKAM. Even though some of the topics are sort of deep, it is well written for middle school kids. I have not read the first book and need to do so. I would recommend this book for all To Kill a Mockingbird fans...  
Four Stars.

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### **Liz says**

This book was so lovely I didn't want it to end. Very much in the style of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Neri tells a story based on real events in the young lives of real people Truman Capote and Harper Lee, childhood friends and neighbors. In a no-holds-barred exposition of daily life and racism in the rural south during the 1930s, Neri's elegant prose paints unique scenes and fully develops the characters. The tale centers around Truman running away from military school in the north, riding the rails back to Monroeville, Alabama, and bringing a curse with him. His friends Nelle (Harper), Big Boy, and Edison are delighted to be in his company again. Their adventures are full of danger, compassion, and regret, but they learn to "bear witness" when they can't make things right. Readers of all ages will be mesmerized, and I encourage adults to indulge!

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### **Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says**

Nelle Lee is astonished by the arrival of her old friend, Truman Capote. He has, she learns, run away from military school. A whole series of adventures ensue, including Truman and his two elderly cousins surviving a fire in their home and Nelle and Truman managing to anger the town bully.

It's based on true stories and it's not.

It's a children's story and it's not.

If you love Harper Lee and Truman Capote, you will enjoy this little book, whether every story is true or not and whether you are a child or not.

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### **Tara Oshinski says**

I will honestly say that I was oblivious to the fact that Truman Capote and Harper Lee were friends growing up. I think the fact that it made me research and delve further into the biographies of each person is what I enjoyed about the book. The humble beginnings of each person was interesting and I thought the portrayal of the town during segregation would be eye opening to children. The only thing that felt a bit contrived was the trial storyline. It seemed like it was thrown in there to make a connection to "*To Kill a Mockingbird*", which I do understand was part of Harper Lee's life, but I think I would have rather had the story go a different direction because the outcome of the trial and the men's lives was wrapped up in one sentence. Overall, an informative piece of fiction.

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### **Sarah says**

As someone who would name *To Kill a Mockingbird* as her favorite book of all time, I am willing to read just about anything about Nelle Harper Lee. This second installment in G. Neri's series for school age kids about the friendship between Nelle and Truman Capote as young children is, in my extremely non-humble opinion, better than the first.

To be sure, some of this is likely due to the fact that, it being a Christmas book, I am far less of a Scrooge in my ratings and reviews. Nonetheless, once the book was under way I was drawn into life in small town Monroeville, Alabama. At the center of this novel is yet another court case of A.C. Lee, Nelle's father, and

the one upon which her best seller was loosely based. As in G. Neri's earlier book, race takes center stage and allows young readers to learn how despicably blacks were treated in this country. Additionally, readers are told more about Truman Capote's sad, lonely childhood and the pitiful job his parents did raising him; fortunately tempered by his family in Alabama. The climactic Christmas scene, although I am not sure of its historical accuracy, is truly heart warming and a definite boon to the Christmas season.

My criticism of this book is the same as its predecessor, too much tell rather than show. This is, I believe, one of the most difficult things for a writer to pull off. How does one inform the reader about necessary background information without it seeming too much like a textbook? It is certainly not a craft I have mastered but I do think some of the early chapters suffered from tell-ism.

Overall, I was favorably impressed and it did cause me to wonder about where the line between fact and poetic license was drawn. As such, for the inquisitive child, this book might serve as a great jumping off point for further research.

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### **Marcus Newman says**

Wow, Neri really out does himself here in a completely unexpected way. Was expecting a Trumanesque Christmas Tale, ala A Christmas Memory, which, in fact, is here. But this novel for middle schoolers goes much deeper into To Kill a Mockingbird territory. The backbone of the story explores the true trial that inspired TKAM, apparently the only criminal case Harper Lee's father undertook. Told over 3 Christmases, this story is a true coming of age tale between two outsider kids trying to find their way into the world. It even ends with an epilogue in the future when Ms. Lee gets her chance to write the famous novel we've all come to treasure. While the first novel, Tru & Nelle, was utterly charming and poignant, this one is feels on a deeper level and lingers much longer on the heart and soul. It is one of the rare sequels that outdoes the original.

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### **Jana says**

I had the opportunity to read a digital ARC of this middle grade historical fiction novel from NetGalley in exchange for this review. This book is a follow-up to Neri's 2016 novel, Tru & Nelle. It continues the fictionalized account of Truman Capote's and Harper Lee's friendship during their childhood. I loved the first book, and I think this is a nice sequel.

While this is a historical fiction story, it was inspired by real people and real events that took place in the 1930s. Truman Capote and Nelle Harper Lee were childhood friends in Monroeville, Alabama. This novel opens a few years after the events of the first book, with a custody hearing in which Truman chooses to live with his mother and her husband in New York City. A few years later, Truman is sent to a military school from which he is running away – back to Alabama. Truman arrives in town a few days before Christmas, and it seems there is nothing but trouble from the moment he returns. And while Truman believes he is cursed, against the backdrop of the South during the Jim Crow era, he and those around him learn the true meaning of the grace and giving during the holiday season.

The skillful character development continues in this story, with a strain on Tru and Nelle's relationship because they are growing up into young adults and are unsure how they are supposed to feel about each other. I think that young readers who enjoyed the first book, will enjoy this one as well. I do think that the second book is dependent on the first book – if a middle grade reader hasn't read the first book, they probably won't understand or appreciate the first book.

### **Cindy Hudson says**

Truman Capote and Nelle Harper Lee are well known writers, yet young readers may not know that the two met when they were children in the town of Monroeville, Alabama. Their friendship continued even though Capote often lived elsewhere, and as adults they helped each other with their writing. Author G. Neri wrote about the two as children, weaving in facts with fiction in the novel, Tru & Nelle. His follow up, Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale, revisits them at another time in their lives, Christmas of 1937.

Once again Neri takes basic facts from the time then adds fiction to create a story that shows the simple pleasures of celebrations during the Great Depression as well as the hardships some people suffered. The result is an often light-hearted tale that also delves into the darker side of the era, especially for black people who faced danger regularly while living in the South under Jim Crow laws.

Writing about iconic literary figures is no easy task, especially when Lee herself fictionalized her childhood in her novel, To Kill a Mockingbird. Yet Neri succeeds in helping readers understand the real lives and personalities of Capote and Lee as well as the people who shaped them. I recommend Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale for readers aged 10 to 13.

The publisher provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Erin says**

So lovely. A perfect Christmas read that has inspired me to know more about Nelle Harper Lee and Truman Capote. I never knew To Kill A Mockingbird may not have been written had it not been for a very special Christmas gift!

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### **Lynn says**

Truman Capote and Nelle Harper Lee were best friends in Monroeville, AR. This fictional tale covers three Christmases in their lives. One in which Truman comes home from NYC for a court custody hearing as his parents are fighting for him. Another as a youth when his mother has sent him away to military school where he is bullied and tortured for being effeminate, and as a famous adult author I'm which he gives Nelle money to live on while she writes her novel, To Kill A Mockingbird. Monroeville is a racist Southern town where Jim Crow laws affect the local black populace and Truman's father tries to fight against. Good story but not as moving as I hoped.

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### **Jessica White says**

Oh boy, I could not wait to get my hands on this book!!!

Tru & Nelle: A Christmas Tale picks up four years later with Tru running away from his New York Military School, back home to Alabama. He missed his family. He missed Big Boy. But really he missed Nelle.

Obviously, that's who he decides to see before anyone else.

Once finally deciding to head to his old house, he slips into bed with his blankie and Sook. But suddenly there was smoke and then the whole house was just....gone. Christmas was obviously ruined at this point and Tru needed to fix it. After all, it's his fault that bad luck follows him everywhere.

So they set off to find the perfect Christmas tree, when they run into bully, Boss, son of the Klan's ex-Grand Dragon. They know they're in big trouble but don't really know what to do. Best to go talk to A.C. Lee, he'll know what to do.

Soon after, Nelle is on a crime scene with A.C. when she realizes there were actually TWO perpetrators, and he thinks that old, black man may have seen something. She soon learns that they're looking for two colored men, one who was injured in the robbery. But in Monroeville, Alabama in the 1930's, that statement alone will bring some heat.

When two colored men show up at Big Boy's house, one of them with a limp, Nelle knows it must have been them. They committed a crime.... But that wasn't the case. Two men hanged for a crime they didn't commit. All because the jury was 12 white men, one of whom was the son of the victim. Seems a little unjust to me, but again 1930's Alabama.

There's also a lot of references and scenes including the Klan which always throws me off because it's a kids book. But honestly, things like this did and do still happen.

G. Neri is a fantastic storyteller. I loved reading this, just as much as I loved the first Tru & Nelle novel. I love how he paints Tru's eccentric personality and Nelle's tomboy attitude. I love that he's from the Gulf Coast (just like me!). I love that he got to spend time researching two fantastic authors and decided to portray them as children with big, big imaginations. Basically, I love everything about Tru & Nelle.

This review and more by G. Neri & Truman Capote can be found at [A Reader's Diary!](#)

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## **Carol says**

Please see my review on Amazon.com under C. Wong. Thank you!

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## **Cynthia says**

Initially I was drawn to this book because the main characters were Harper Lee and Truman Capote even though I don't read much children's lit but that's not what kept me reading. In the tradition of Capote and Lee Neri tackles some weighty issue about diversity. Neri is skilled at meeting his middle school audience in an engaging manner but in a way that's accessible to that age group. I suppose strictly speaking he's not portraying the 1930's Alabama small town racial situation as harshly as it probably was but he hits it hard

enough and there's time enough for kids to deal with when they're older and emotionally better equipped.

Of course there's no overt sexuality however Nelle's Tomboyish ways and Capote's dandy tendencies are also dealt with with acceptance and in an age appropriate manner and then there's the implied mental illness or just plain uniqueness of some of the town folks which also felt honest and presented in a humorous or matter of fact way. The Christmas theme doesn't really impact the story until almost the end so this book could be read at any time of the year. This would be a fun book for kids to read over the holidays or to have read to them by a parent or teacher.

Thank you to the publisher for providing an Advance Reader's Copy.

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### **Julia says**

This continues Tru and Nelle's 'actual-ish' story as 12 year olds from To Kill a Mockingbird where Lee named them Scout and Dill, with an appendix with Tru, a just published author, and Nelle who has been given a gift of a year off from working by patrons. This is a delight, whether you know To Kill a Mockingbird and the Capote stories that dovetail with it, or not. But there is Sook's fruitcake recipe, *without liquor*. Ah well, I enjoyed the novel in spite of that. I borrowed this from interlibrary loan.

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