

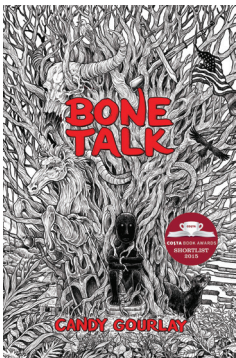
WILD SONG

by Candy Gourlay

About the book: *Wild Song*

The year is 1904. Luki has lived a tribal life in the mountains of the Philippines. Now she's growing up, she is expected to become a wife and a mother, but Luki isn't ready to give up her dream to become a warrior.

When her tribe is offered a journey to America to be part of the St. Louis World's Fair, Luki will discover that the land of opportunity does not share its possibilities equally . . . *Wild Song* follows on from Candy Gourlay's book *Bone Talk* which tells the story of Luki's and Samkad's village life when the Americans first arrived.



Bone Talk: what happened before *Wild Song*

The Philippines, 100 years ago. A boy called Samkad wants to become a man. He is desperate to be given his own shield, spear and axe. His best friend, Luki, wants to be a warrior too - but she is a girl and that is forbidden. Then a new boy arrives in the village and everything changes. He brings news that a people called 'Americans' are bringing war right to his home.

About the author: Candy Gourlay

Growing up in the Philippines, Candy Gourlay wondered why all the books she loved only featured pink-skinned children who lived in snow-covered worlds unlike her steamy, tropical home in Manila. It took her years to fulfil her dream of becoming an author – and years to learn that Filipino stories too, belong in the pages of books. Candy's novels for young readers, *Tall Story* and *Shine*, have been published to acclaim and listed for many prizes such as the Carnegie Medal and the Guardian Children's Book Prize. She lives in London with her family, where she wages war on the snails in her garden.

Have a look at [Candy's website](https://www.candygourlay.co.uk/about-candy) where she tells us all about herself:

<https://www.candygourlay.co.uk/about-candy>

Candy dedicates this book *Wild Song* to her cousin Susan Quimpo, who was a Filipino activist in the 1970s when students rose up against the brutality of the dictator there. Here is a tribute which Candy wrote about Susan's life:

<https://www.candygourlay.com/2020/07/dear-susan-tribute-to-my-cousin-susan.html>



Thinking and talking about *Wild Song*

Here are some questions to get you thinking and talking about this book – some general questions about your feelings and response to the story, and also things to think about, inspired by the themes and events in this book.

- How did you feel about *Wild Song* when you'd finished it?
- Where were you when you read it?
- Did the cover make you want to read it?
- What kind of a book did you think it was going to be?
- Did it grip you right from the start?
- Did you want to read it right to the end?
- What do you remember most about it?
- Did you skip any parts? Which ones?
- What was the thing you most liked finding out from this book?
- Which character did you like best and why?
- Was there any character you really didn't like? – why not?
- Have you read any other books by this author? Which ones?
- If not, has this book encouraged you to read more by her?
- If you gave up on this book, can you say why?
- What would you tell your friends about this story?

Why do you think this book is called '*Wild Song*'?

Have a look at the words on the back of the book's cover.

You can find several songs in this story: maybe it's about the tree where Luki is sitting at the start of the book, or perhaps the singing of the ocean, or the call of adventure.

The ocean was singing.

And then, slowly, beneath the waves, something moved...a great eye opened... (p83)

What do you think Luki is seeing here? And probably hearing as well?

And then I heard it...A song unlike anything we had heard at the World's Fair...

It was calling to me. It was home. (p307)



Wordsearch: the people in the story

Here are 13 characters who appear in *Wild Song*.

Look for them in the squares – across, down, up, and from right to left



LUKI SAMKAD SIDONG TILIN KINYO MOTHER
SADIE LOCKET TRUMAN HUNT JOHNNY STANLEY
THEODORE ROOSEVELT MISTER WILLIAM WALTER LOVING

When you have found them, talk about each one – who they are and the part they play in the story. Think of at least one word to describe each person.

Choose from this list or add your own description:

impetuous

adventurous

curious

responsive

brave

mischievous

kind

patient

artistic

caring

manipulative

helpful

loved



More to think and talk about

Wild Song is set in the Philippines in the early 20th century. The main character is Luki, a teenage girl from the Bontok tribe living in the highlands, who travels to America to take part in the 1904 World's Fair in St Louis. She tells her story and how the events and attitudes of the time impact on their lives – and at the end of the book you'll find a section with information about *What Happened Next*.

Americans in the Philippines in 1904

Get a map of the world, in an atlas or online, and find out where the Philippines is in relation to America, so you can follow the journeys which Luki and Samkad took to America, and back. Look for these towns which were the main stopping places on these journeys: **Manila, Tacoma, St. Louis,** and **San Francisco**.

The Americans had finished their warring and turned their attention to ruling us. So many new laws! (p4)

In the late 19th century, the United States began to build an empire, and after the Spanish-American war in 1898 they took control over Cuba, annexed Hawaii, and claimed Puerto Rico and the Philippines as territories. They did this because they were looking for new markets for their industrial products – and because of their belief in the racial and cultural superiority of America.

Then, from 1899 to 1902 Filipinos fought with the American invaders in the Philippine-American war and there were further skirmishes for years afterwards.

In Bontok we'd become used to Americans changing what was normal. (p53)

What were these new laws and changes? How did Luki's people feel about them? Make a list of all the Americans' rules and changes you find in this story, and make a note next to each one saying whether you think it was beneficial or not for Luki's people.

Going to America

I had thought of him as a benevolent father, inviting us to come to America so that he could meet us for himself and hold us close. (p287)

Who is Luki referring to here? Is this really why he was asking people in her tribe to come to America?

'It will be grand, it will be an adventure!' (p43)

Why did some people think this? And why did others speak against taking up the invitation?

What were Luki's and Tilin's main reasons for going to America? Why did Samkad go?

And it enraged me that I had ever believed America would change my life. (p286)

Even though Luki eventually returns home, do you think she's right in thinking that her life hasn't changed? See what she says below. What differences do you think there could now be in her life?

...I couldn't help thinking about how much more I knew than when we were making our way over. (p294)

Imagine her future life. What do you think Luki might be doing 10 years on from her American adventure?

Think of when you have visited somewhere new – perhaps a new holiday place, starting a new school, or moving house. How did you feel before you went there? What did you think it would be like? What was it like when you were actually there? What differences were there from what you had expected?



Being on show

... Theodore Roosevelt, the President of the United States, would like to invite us to visit America. (p25)

Why did the Americans want to bring people from all over the world and put them on show at the World's Fair?

What do you think about this? How would you feel if this happened to you?

Look at the two descriptions below, showing different aspects of Luki's experience in America, and her feelings about it.

They stared at us with wide eyes and big grins on their faces. They reached out as if they were desperate to touch us. (p88)

I realised that we were just as much an attraction of the fair as all these fine buildings. It certainly made me walk a little bit taller...I felt that I had made the right decision to come to America. (p157)

What arguments were there for and against Luki's people agreeing to be on show in the World's Fair, and agreeing to perform activities which for them had a religious significance?

Explain about the arguments in the chart below, and see what further arguments you could add. Have a look, for example, at what is said on page 232.

ARGUMENTS FOR	ARGUMENTS AGAINST
<i>It certainly made me walk a little bit taller... (P157)</i>	<i>'There is no reason to sing and dance.'</i> (p155) Why does Samkad say this?
<i>All they could hear was the clinking of coins in their imagination. (p233)</i>	<i>'We would never display skulls back home.'</i> (p118) Why not?
	<i>'There is no such thing as a dog feast' (p233)</i>

Today there are still occasions when people dress up and enact cultural and historical experiences.

Here are some examples:

- **people dressing up and offering living history experiences at stately homes**
e.g. <https://www.kentwell.co.uk/>
- **battle re-enactments**
<https://www.livinghistoryarchive.com/article/13-reenactment-events-in-the-uk-you-cant-miss-in-2020>
- **performing traditional dances and ceremonies**
e.g. Morris dancing https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morris_dance
- **displaying on royal tours**
<https://bit.ly/3YpExIz>

Why do you think people take part in these activities, and why do people watch them?



Igorots

...we may have started out as different peoples – Bontoks, Tinguian and Suyocs – but we were Igorots now... (p116)

...the whole of America was calling us Igorot and we might as well be at ease with it. (p120)

This is the collective name which was used for all the different tribes in the Cordilleras, mountains to the north of the Philippines.

What other peoples in this story are generalised under a collective name?

What does this tell you about what the Americans thought of them?

*'Indian don't look like one people.' 'No, they're not, but it's easier just to call them Indians' ...
'Oh, just like it's easier to call us all Igorot! (p210)*

Attitudes and beliefs

But yesterday, two Americas had been revealed to me...One that was unafraid of change, that offered all kinds of choices and adventures and exciting possibility...And then there was the other America, the one that didn't think Igorot children would like to draw with Crayolas. (p237)

Skin colour

It seemed mad to divide the world according to skin colour. (p257)

What laws and practices did the Americans have at this time which separated people of colour and white people?

Clothes

'Should the Filipinos be exposed to the American public in their dusky birthday robes?' (p194)

In their new outfits, the men turned into sad, hunched creatures who couldn't look anyone in the eye. (p196)

Why doesn't it work when the World's Fair organisers try to make the Filipino people wear American clothes?

'It doesn't just change me on the outside, it changes me on the inside.' (p191)

This is what Sadie Locket says about the clothes she wears for her act in the Wild West Show.

List all the reasons you can think of for wearing clothes.

List the different kinds of clothes you wear, and how they make you feel – e.g. school uniform, party clothes, hats...

What are your favourite clothes – and what don't you like wearing?

A woman's place

'I will allow you to do it!' (p37)

Why is Luki so angry when Samkad says this?

'The ancients esteem women. We bear children. We plant the rice, we cultivate the soil. We are the future.' (p10)

This is what Luki's mother has told her. Do you think this means women shouldn't do the same things as men?

There was so much I wanted to tell her...About wanting things that women weren't supposed to have. (p137)

What does Luki find out from Sadie Locket about American attitudes towards women?



Luki and Samkad

At the start of this book Luki and Samkad are teenagers who have been childhood friends, and are now in love with each other. However their relationship has lots of ups and downs throughout their American adventure.

Here are some quotes following the path of this relationship. Make a storyboard, with a picture and speech bubbles illustrating each quote, telling their story.

But now we were sixteen and everything had changed. (p7)

'I will allow you to do it!' (p37)

Then I bent down, scooped up his legs, and heaved him over the side, into the sea. (p74)

And I stayed away even though I wanted to tell him about every new thing. (p82)

...after they took Tilin away, things changed between me and Samkad. I found myself welcoming his company. (p151)

I was glad that I didn't marry Samkad...I would never have had this much fun. (p204)

'I wish I had never come to America,' Samkad said. '...I have not protected anyone!' (p270)

At the beginning of this long journey back... there were only silences between Samkad and me.

...But...something between us was changing. (p296)

...we stepped off our steamer's tilting deck onto Manila's solid ground. (p300)

I had left the village because I did not want to become a wife, and now I was returning with a daughter. (p303)

And now we sat, talking and remembering. (p308)

The World's Fair at St Louis

At the end of this book the section called *What Happened Next* gives more information about people and events in the story.

Using reference books, and an online search, see what more you can find out about this 1904 World's Fair and all the things on display.

'It is no ordinary celebration, it is a World's Fair!...The best of America will be on display...'

...there would be grand buildings and statues...and people from faraway lands dressed in different costumes...new technology such as machines that could send and receive messages through thin air, there would be cars that could fly... (p102)

Sadie Locket is a fictional character but there was certainly a Wild West Show at the Fair – and there was a female American sharpshooter who starred in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show at previous World Fairs.

She was called **Annie Oakley** – see if you can find out more about her.



Writing and drawing

- Describe the scene in the book which has stayed with you, and affected you the most
- Emotions on seeing a place

...that first time you took me into the forest. (p156) And now I could feel my heart racing in my chest again, to the Fair's own belting song...like a door had been wrenched open and a new world revealed to us. (p156)

Think of a place that is special for you. Describe it and say how it makes you feel. Draw a picture of it.

- Feeling happy

I had this strange sensation, as if the slight morning breeze was blowing not just on my face, but inside me. It made me smile. (p182)

Luki is feeling excited about exploring the fair, accompanied by Johnny. Write about a time when you have felt especially happy.

- Things never seen before

Here is Luki's description of ice cream, the first time she had ever seen one:

It was a crunchy kind of biscuit rolled into a cone, with something inside, something cold. (p244)

And here is her description of snow, another new experience:

...I felt something brush against my face. It was just a touch, like a cold fingertip tapping my nose...I felt it again. And again. (p122)

Imagine you have never seen an aeroplane before – or a bar of chocolate!
How would you describe them?

- ‘...Crayola.’ ‘...Coloured wax crayons. Clever new invention.’ (p200)

Tilin's sister Sidong is a skilled artist, and is delighted with the colours of the Crayola crayons.
Choose a scene from the book – or one of those given below and then draw it using wax crayons!

Scene A

At first America was just a shadow on the horizon...And then it became longer and darker. And soon we could see green swathes that could be trees, and the shapes of rocks...we were sailing between islands... (p84)

Scene B

The city was called Tacoma and...in the lowering sun, the sweep of brick buildings gleamed like gold. Hundreds of columns of smoke spiralled from every rooftop. It was a hilly place, the buildings seeming to stack one on top of the other. From the boat, the horse-drawn carts moving up and down steep streets looked tiny. Behind the city loomed a great white mountain. (p85)



More reading

AUTHOR	TITLE & SYNOPSIS	PUBLISHER	ISBN
Books by Candy Gourlay			
Illustrated by Francesca Chessa	<i>Is it a Mermaid?</i> A plump, splashy dugong tries to convince two children that she is a mermaid.	Otter-Barry	978-191-959732
	<i>Shine</i> Myths and ghosts haunt the story of Rosa, who must hide herself away	Tamarind	978-1848531321
	<i>Tall Story</i> All Bernardo wants is to join his mother and sister in London. But when his visa finally arrives, he has turned into an eight foot giant	Tamarind	978-1848531376
Identity			
George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steve Scott, Harmony Becker	<i>They Called Us Enemy</i> The Star Trek star's account of his childhood years imprisoned as an enemy alien during World War II	IDW Publishing	1603094504
Gene Luen Yang	<i>American Born Chinese</i> Award-winning graphic novel about growing up with the American Dream when nobody sees anything American about you	First Second	1596431520
Thanhà Lai	<i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> The journey onboard a refugee ship bound for America is hard - but nothing can prepare 10-year-old Hà for the strangeness of the country that greets them on the other side. Award-winning verse novel.	HarperCollins	0061962791
Sarah Crossan	<i>The Weight of Water</i> Armed with a suitcase and an old laundry bag filled with clothes, Kasienka and her mother head for England. Exquisite verse novel	Bloomsbury	1526606909
Catherine Johnson	<i>Freedom</i> 12-year-old Nathaniel is enslaved but when his master sends him on a ship to England, where slavery has ended, he thinks he will soon be free	Scholastic	1407185489



More reading – continued

AUTHOR	TITLE & SYNOPSIS	PUBLISHER	ISBN
Set in the Philippines			
Erin Entrada Kelly	<i>The Land of Forgotten Girls</i> Sol and Ming's dad move them from the Philippines to Louisiana where an evil stepmother awaits. Then their father leaves.	Greenwillow Books	0062238647
Gail D. Villanueva	<i>My Fate According to the Butterfly</i> Sab has complicated family troubles and then she sees a giant black butterfly, an omen of death, and she knows that she's doomed! Critically acclaimed	Scholastic	1338310518
Marie Miranda Cruz	<i>Everlasting Nora</i> Nora is an informal settler who calls the sprawling Manila North Cemetery her home. When Nora's mother goes missing, she must use all her wits to put her little family back together again	Starscape	978-0765394590

Wordsearch: Solution

