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Jefferson's Sons

Author:
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Grades 5-9
Third U.S. President Thomas Jefferson lived at the plantation Monticello and kept slaves to work in his fields, farm and home. One of his slaves was a woman named Sally Hemings, mother to four of Jefferson's children - Beverly, Harriet, Maddy, and Eston. Though slaves, the children and their mother were given special treatment by Jefferson because of his discreet relationship to them - but nevertheless, slaves they remained.

Master Jefferson promises freedom to all four of his slave children upon their twenty-first birthdays, but Beverly, the eldest, cannot imagine leaving his mother, sister, brothers - but especially his father. Light-skinned and longing for a father figure, Beverly struggles with the secrecy of Jefferson's nonpublic identity as his father, especially when Jefferson presents him and his brothers with a kit violin and lessons. He and his siblings imagine a life where his mother, siblings and father could live openly together as a real family; a life that did not involve waiting on Master Jefferson's real children, especially the snippy Miss Martha.

Based on true events at Monticello during the early 1800s, *Jefferson's Sons* is a slave tale of a different order, exploring slavery and racial issues from the fresh perspective of Jefferson's slave children. The novel is a welcome look into one aspect of post-revolutionary slave life in Virginia that explores the bonds of family and friendship.

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