

Name _____

Date _____



Emmett Till

“Let the people see what I’ve seen.”

Mamie Till shared her grief, let the world feel her pain.
Made sure her son Emmett’s death would not be in vain.
Everyone would know her son Emmett Till’s name.

In 1941, Emmett Till was born.
Lived with his ma Mamie Till in Chicago, Illinois.
Couple bumps in the road, but life was a joy,
A joyful life that would soon be destroyed.
He helped his single mom and would cook and clean.
He did laundry. They made a good team.
His pa died when he was four, left Emmett with his ring.
He tried it on every year, but it was too big for him.
His great uncle came to visit from a place called Money,
A small town in the state of Mississippi.
Emmett wanted to go back with him, his mama said no,
But finally he convinced her, for a few weeks he would go.
She was like, Emmett, you don’t even know.
Mamie was originally from the South, you see.
Knew firsthand how bad it could be.
She said, in the South, they were segregated.
She said, in the South, that Blacks were hated.
She said, in the South, be on your best behavior.
She said, if you get in trouble, I won’t be there to save ya.
Before he left, Mamie said, wait, one thing!
She ran inside to get his Dad’s ring.
The initials read LT on his Dad’s ring.

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Three days into his visit, Till and some other kids went to the store for refreshments—

Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market after a long day in the sun working.

Till entered the store to buy gum. What happened next is uncertain,

Things set in motion that we can’t turn back from.

In court, Carolyn Bryant claimed he grabbed her and whistled at her as he left.

Some people say she stormed out stressed.

What happened next? What happened next?

Bryant and her sister-in-law

Agreed not to tell their husbands at all.

But when their husbands returned, a kid who had been at the store told ’em Emmett cat-called, whistled at Carolyn. Now the husband is mad at him.

The nerve of this Black kid, let’s teach some manners then.

It was Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam

Planning and plotting revenge, plotting and planning to get ’em.

They left early morning—2:00am they were gone.

They were gonna do something evil, but beyond.

Milam and Bryant went to Emmett’s great uncle’s house.

His uncle pleaded with them, saying come on Emmett’s just a child.

They kidnapped Emmett—that’s what his Uncle was saying.

They were the predators and he was the prey. And

They dragged Emmett’s body to the river side,

Took him to a place where no one could hear his cries.

They beat him so hard he couldn’t be recognized.

A shot to the head and ultimately Emmett died.

With barbed wire, they tied a cotton gin fan around his neck,

Threw his body in the river like a worthless object.

Picture young Emmett taking his last breath.
So much for basic human rights all humans should protect.
Three days later Emmett's body was located,
Unrecognizable, bloated, and mutilated
But his great uncle identified him by one thing:
He was wearing Dad's ring.

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Mamie Till received her son's casket in Chicago shortly after.
She collapsed at the sight of it, grief-stricken, heartbroken.
She decided she would have the casket open
At the funeral to show the world the horror,
To show the world her pain and her sorrow.
Look what they did to my baby.
To see his brutally beaten body thousands of people waited in line.
A critical early moment in the civil rights movement.
The funeral brought light to the plight of Black people—injustice
In the Jim Crow South.
Emmett's killers acquitted, all-white jury bailed 'em out.
Still, Emmett Till's death would not be in vain,
Not just going to be another Black child slain.
From Tulane to Spokane and Arizona to Maine,
Everyone would know Emmett Till's name.