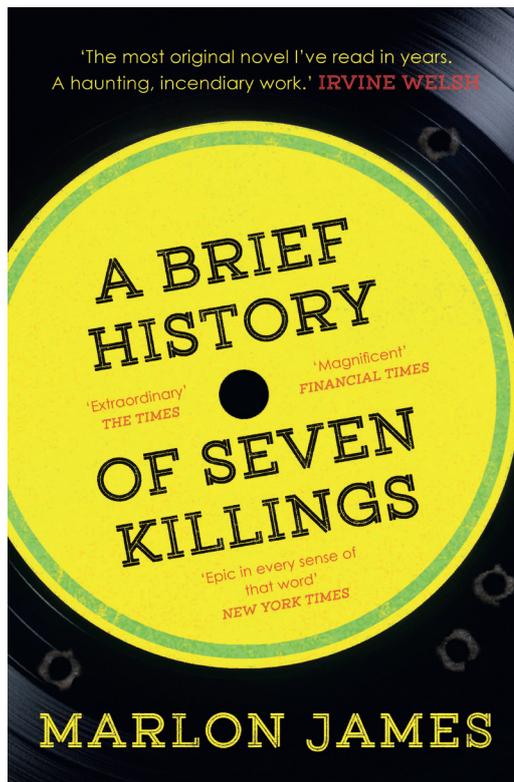


# Reader's Guide



Other novels by Marlon James  
*The Book of Night Women* (2009)  
*John Crow's Devil* (2015)

## A Brief History of Seven Killings Marlon James

Oneworld Publications

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)

#FinestFiction



## About the author

Marlon James was born in Jamaica. He is the author of *The Book of Night Women*, which won the Dayton Literary Peace Prize and the Minnesota Book Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His debut novel, *John Crow's Devil*, was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize and shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and was a *New York Times* Editors' Choice. His fiction and non-fiction has appeared in *Esquire* and *Granta*. He teaches at Macalester College, Minnesota, USA.

## A Brief History of Seven Killings

Jamaica, 1976. Just weeks before the general election, as political tensions mount, seven gunmen storm Bob Marley's house, machine guns blazing. The reggae superstar survives, but the gunmen are never caught.

Inspired by this near-mythic event, Marlon James' dazzling new novel takes the form of an imagined oral biography, told by a cast of unforgettable characters – slum kids, drug lords, gunmen, journalists, beauty queens, conmen, FBI and CIA agents, and even Keith Richards' drug dealer. The story sweeps across three decades and traverses strange landscapes, as motivations are examined – and questions asked.

## Discussion points

In *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, Bob Marley is referred to as just 'the Singer' – he is a peripheral figure. Why do you think this is?

Some characters have proper names, while others have nicknames. Consider the significance of this.

The 'Novel' has been described by many as being the most democratic of literary forms – its length and assimilation of multiple voices allows it to represent a variety of different ideological viewpoints. To what extent can *A Brief History of Seven Killings* be said to be democratic in this sense?

Do specific details and cultural references (e.g. names of real people, bands and television shows) add authenticity to James' fictional creations?

In an interview in the *New York Times* Marlon James has said that 'history is always shaping everything'. How did your understanding of the assassination attempt and its aftermath alter as the novel progressed?

Did you find the ending satisfying?

## Themed reading

V.S. Naipaul *The Middle Passage*  
Timothy White *Catch a Fire: The Life of Bob Marley*  
William Faulkner *As I Lay Dying*

## Useful links

[www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)  
[www.oneworld-publications.com](http://www.oneworld-publications.com)  
[www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/marlon-james-a-brief-history-of-seven-killings](http://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/marlon-james-a-brief-history-of-seven-killings)