

**An Adaption of Tim Tingle's *Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship & Freedom*  
by Beth Thames  
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***Crossing Bok Chitto* © 2006. Script used in conjunction with the Texas Bluebonnet Award with permission from Cinco Puntos Press.**

Voices: Narrator 1  
Narrator 2  
Narrator 3  
Narrator 4  
Martha Toms' mother  
Martha Tom  
Big Mo  
Little Mo

Approximately: 4 minutes

**Narrator 1:** This reading presents a tale from both the African-American and the Choctaw traditions.

**Narrator 2:** It is told in the book *Crossing Bok Chitto* by Tim Tingle and illustrated by Jeanne Rorex Bridges, both of whom are Native Americans.

**Narrator 3:** It tells of a river called Bok Chitto in Mississippi.

**Narrator 4:** It takes place before the Civil War and the Trail of Tears.

**Narrator 1:** On one side of Bok Chitto lived the Choctaws and on the other--the plantation owners and their slaves.

**Narrator 2:** The law said that if a slave escaped and crossed Bok Chitto, the slave was free.

**Martha Tom's mother:** Martha Tom, get up out of bed. I have to cook for a wedding today and I need you to pick blackberries.

**Martha Tom:** I know I am not to cross the river, but there are no blackberries on this side. I will look across Bok Chitto.

**Narrator 3:** Martha Tom knew the secret path of stones her people put across the river.

**Narrator 4:** When the river flooded, the tribe would build the stones up; during dry times, they built the stones down.

**Narrator 1:** In her search for berries, Martha Tom came to a clearing filled with logs for benches.

**Narrator 2:** A skinny black man stepped out of the trees. She heard first one voice singing, then many voices.

**Narrator 3:** (*chanting or sung*) Oh who will come and go with me?

**All Narrators:** (*chanting or sung*) We will come and go with you. We are bound for the Promised Land.

**Narrator 4:** It was the meeting of a slave church. Martha Tom listened and the sound of the music touched her deeply.

**Big Mo:** You must be a Choctaw from across the river. Since you are lost, I will have my son, Little Mo, show you the way back.

**Little Mo:** (*nervously*) But, Daddy, what if the men from the plantation see me near the river? They will punish me.

**Big Mo:** Son, you need to learn how to move among them without being seen. (*slowly and quietly*) You move not too fast, not too slow, eyes to the ground, away you go.

**Narrator 1:** And that is what they did. They moved:

**Everyone:** (*in unison*) Not too fast, not too slow, eyes to the ground and away you go.

**Narrator 2:** And just as if they were invisible, Little Mo and Martha Tom walked right past the plantation owners to the river.

**Martha Tom:** (*mischievously*) Now I am going to have fun playing this game with Little Mo. He will not be able to see the stones and will think I am walking on water.

**Little Mo:** (*in disbelief*) Are you a witch? How do you do that?

**Narrator 3:** Martha Tom showed him the secret stone path.

**All Narrators:** (*chanting*) “Way, hey ya hey ya. Way, hey ya hey ya.”

**Narrator 4:** The tribe was chanting music for the wedding ceremony. The sound of the music touched Little Mo deeply.

**Narrator 1:** Soon Martha Tom was crossing Bok Chitto each Sunday to sit in church with Little Mo’s family.

**Narrator 2:** Then one day, trouble came. Twenty slaves were sold, and Little Mo’s mother was on the list of slaves to be sold and sent away.

**Big Mo:** (*sadly*) How will I tell my family that this has happened? I will wait until we have had supper so we can enjoy this time together.

**Narrator 3:** After supper, Big Mo gave his family heart-breaking news.

**Narrator 4:** There was much crying.

**Little Mo:** (*excitedly*) Daddy, Martha Tom showed me how to cross Bok Chitto. We can get away.

**Big Mo:** The plantation owners will have dogs guarding the river tonight.

**Little Mo:** But Daddy, remember you told me how to be invisible.

**Everyone:** Not to fast, not too slow, eyes to the ground, away you go!

**Big Mo:** (*determinedly*) You are right, Little Mo. We must try.

**Narrator 1:** Did Little Mo and his family escape?

**Narrator 2:** Did they indeed become invisible?

**Narrator 3:** There's only one way to find out.

**Narrator 4:** Read *Crossing Bok Chitto* to see how this story ends.

**Narrator 1:** And remember--when you don't want to be seen you have to travel...

**Everyone:** Not too fast, not too slow, eyes to the ground and away you go.