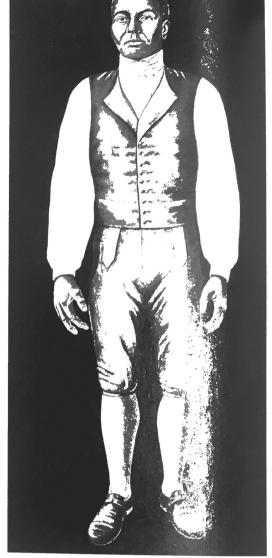
## Nota Bones

Marilyn Nelson



Fortune (2001), William B. Westwood. © William B. Westwood.

I was not this body,
I was not these bones.
This skeleton was just my
temporary home.

5 Elementary molecules¹ <u>converged</u> for a breath, then danced on beyond my individual death. And I am not my body, I am not my body.

We are brief incarnations,

10 we are clouds in clothes.
We are water respirators,
we are how earth knows.
I bore<sup>2</sup> light passed on from an original flame;
while it was in my hands it was called by my name.

15 But I am not my body, I am not my body. ©

**converge** (kən-vûrj') v. to come together in one place; meet

incarnation (ĭn'-kär-nā'-shən) n. a bodily form

Reread lines 3–6. What are they saying about our physical bodies?
What words in lines 9–14 suggest the same ideas?
Add these to your chart.

elementary molecules: the smallest, most basic particles of substances.

<sup>2.</sup> bore: carried; transported.

You can own a man's body, but you can't own his mind. That's like making a bridle

20 to ride on the wind.

I will tell you one thing, and I'll tell you true: Life's the best thing that can happen to you. But you are not your body, you are not your body.

You can own someone's body,
but the soul runs free.
It roams the night sky's
mute geometry.
You can murder hope, you can pound faith flat,
but like weeds and wildf lowers, they grow right back.
For you are not your body,
you are not your body.

You are not your body, you are not your bones. 35 What's <u>essential</u> about you is what can't be owned.

is what can't be owned.
What's essential in you is your longing to raise your itty-bitty voice in the **cosmic** praise.
For you are not your body,

40 you are not your body. **1** 

Well, I woke up this morning just so glad to be free, glad to be free, glad to be free. I woke up this morning in restful peace. For I am not my body,

I am not my bones.
I am not my body,
glory hallelujah, not my bones,
I am not my bones.

essential (ĭ-sĕn'shəl) adj. having the qualities that give something its true identity

cosmic (kŏz'mik) *adj*. universal; infinitely large

COMMON CORE RL 4

WORD CHOICE When poets choose a word, they consider the way it sounds, the way it affects the rhythm of a line, and sometimes even the way it looks on the page. They also consider the word's connotation, or the feelings and ideas associated with the word that go beyond its basic definition. In line 38, Marilyn Nelson chooses to use the word itty-bitty instead of small. How does her choice affect the line's meaning, rhythm, and tone?

SOUND DEVICES
What lines in this poem
have been most often
repeated?