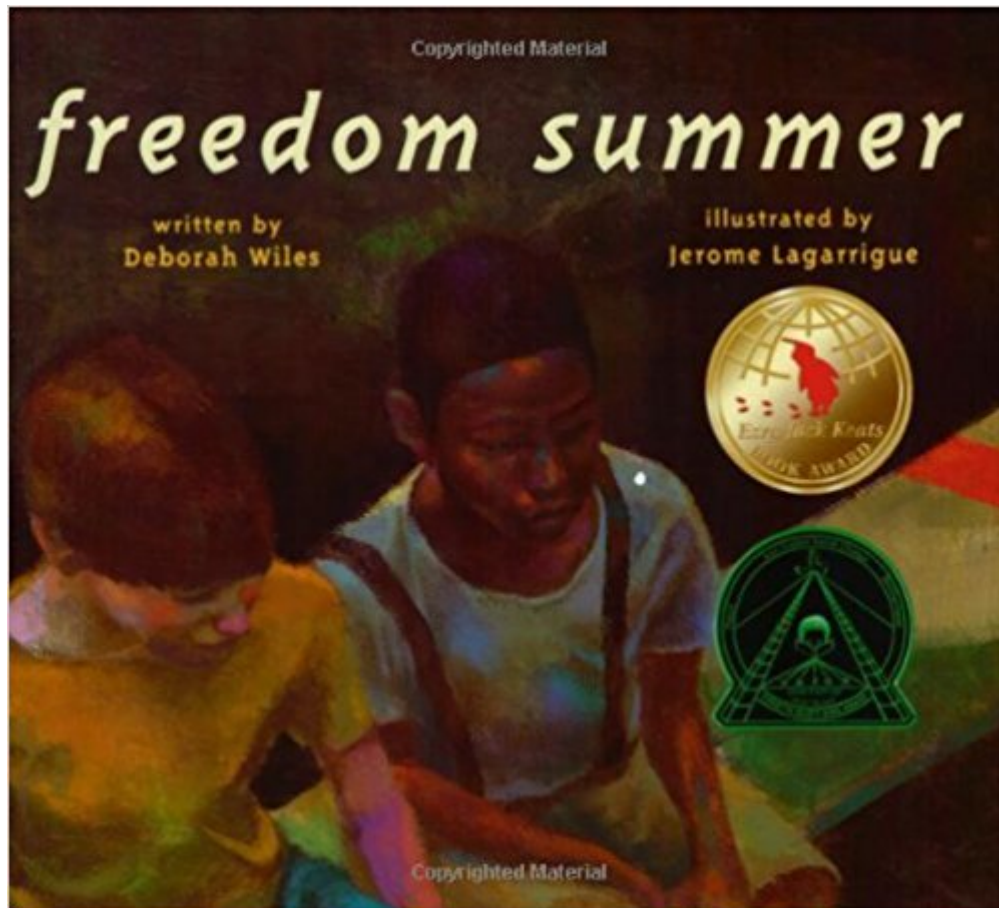




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Freedom Summer



Synopsis

John Henry swims better than anyone I know. He crawls like a catfish, blows bubbles like a swamp monster, but he doesn't swim in the town pool with me. He's not allowed. Joe and John Henry are a lot alike. They both like shooting marbles, they both want to be firemen, and they both love to swim. But there's one important way they're different: Joe is white and John Henry is black, and in the South in 1964, that means John Henry isn't allowed to do everything his best friend is. Then a law is passed that forbids segregation and opens the town pool to everyone. Joe and John Henry are so excited they race each other there...only to discover that it takes more than a new law to change people's hearts.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD460L (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

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Language: English

ISBN-10: 068987829X

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Product Dimensions: 10 x 0.2 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 56 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #23,644 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism #50 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s #61 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > African-American

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

Set in Mississippi during the summer of 1964, Wiles's affecting debut children's book about two boys—one white and the other African-American—underscores the bittersweet aftermath of the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Rather than opening public pools, roller rinks and shops to African-Americans, many towns and private owners boarded up the doors. Wiles delivers her message incisively through the credible voices of her young characters, narrator Joe and his best friend, John Henry, whose mother works as housekeeper for Joe's family. Joe and John spend

many hours swimming together in the creek because John is not allowed in the public pool, so on the day the Civil Rights Act is enacted, they visit the town pool together, excited about diving for nickels in the clear water. Instead they find a work crew including John Henry's older brother filling in the pool with asphalt. "John Henry's voice shakes. 'White folks don't want colored folks in their pool.' " The tale ends on an upbeat if tenuous note, as the boys walk together through the front door of a once-segregated shop to buy ice pops. Lagarrigue's (*My Man Blue*) softly focused, impressionistic paintings capture the lazy feel of summer days and affirm the bond between the two boys. The artist's close-up portraits of the boys' faces, as well as the body language of other characters, reinforce the narrative's powerful emotional pitch. Ages 4-8. (Jan.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Ages 5-8. "John Henry Waddell is my best friend," begins the narrator of this story, set during a summer of desegregation in the South. John Henry is black and the narrator is white, so the boys swim together at the creek, rather than at the whites-only town pool, and the narrator buys the ice-cream at the segregated store. When new laws mandate that the pool, and everything else, must desegregate, the boys rejoice, until the town fills the pool with tar in protest and the narrator tries to see this town, "through John Henry's eyes." The boy's voice, presented in punchy, almost poetic sentences, feels overly romanticized, even contrived in places. It's the illustrations that stun. In vibrantly colored, broad strokes, Lagarrigue, who illustrated Nikki Grimes' *My Man Blue* (1999), paints riveting portraits of the boys, particularly of John Henry, that greatly increase the story's emotional power. Beautiful work by an illustrator to watch. Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

One caveat: this book tells a story of the realities of segregation through the eyes of a white boy who has a black friend. One wonders how John Henry--the black boy--might have told his own story..*Freedom Summer* by Deborah Wiles and illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue won both the 2002 Ezra Jack Keats Award as well as a Coretta Scott King Award. It begins with two friends enjoying the leisurely pace of summer, hanging around, being friends together, swimming in a local creek. "John Henry swims better than anybody the narrator knows. They ecstatically anticipate the prospect of the local community pool's opening day. But, when they arrive at the gates, the boys discover that the facility has been bulldozed. No one will swim there again. Why? Because this story takes place in a segregated America. In 1960, laws ensured blacks could not share facilities with whites. After desegregation legislation passed, instead of complying,

Mobile, Alabama opted to close the town pool, ice cream parlor, and roller rink. Hate and prejudice blinded people to fairness and the rights of all citizens to equality and access to facilities. To deny blacks access, they denied the entire community access. This award-winning book splendidly captures the boys' friendship so when they encounter the closed pool, the reader feels dazed by the community's betrayal. The conversations this book might open are important one on issues such as racism, prejudice as well as loyalty, friendship and thinking for oneself. The forward by the author offers additional insights about her motives for writing the book as well as her personal encounters with segregation during her own childhood. Adoption-attuned Lens: The potential for adoption-related conversations is broad. In addition to racial and cultural bias, adoptive families frequently encounter bias against their families. Our family ties are often questions in terms of permanency, depth and reality. This book can help families talk about standing up for ourselves as well as being a voice for others who face discrimination and bias. --Gayle H. Swift, "ABC, Adoption & Me: A Multicultural Picture Book

I read it in my daycare, the kids loved the story

Very good primary level book to teach the theme of injustice and discrimination. I used it with middle school students.

Wonderful perspective for raising white allies in order to give historical perspective to the history of segregation.

Wonderful and touching book.

I shared this with my fourth grade class and it opened the door to some thoughtful discussions. The book is well written with beautiful illustrations.

This too is a great book

As the laws began to change, this story shows how a friendship between a black boy and a white boy explored the changing societal rules together. I love the history and the sweet story of friendship.

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