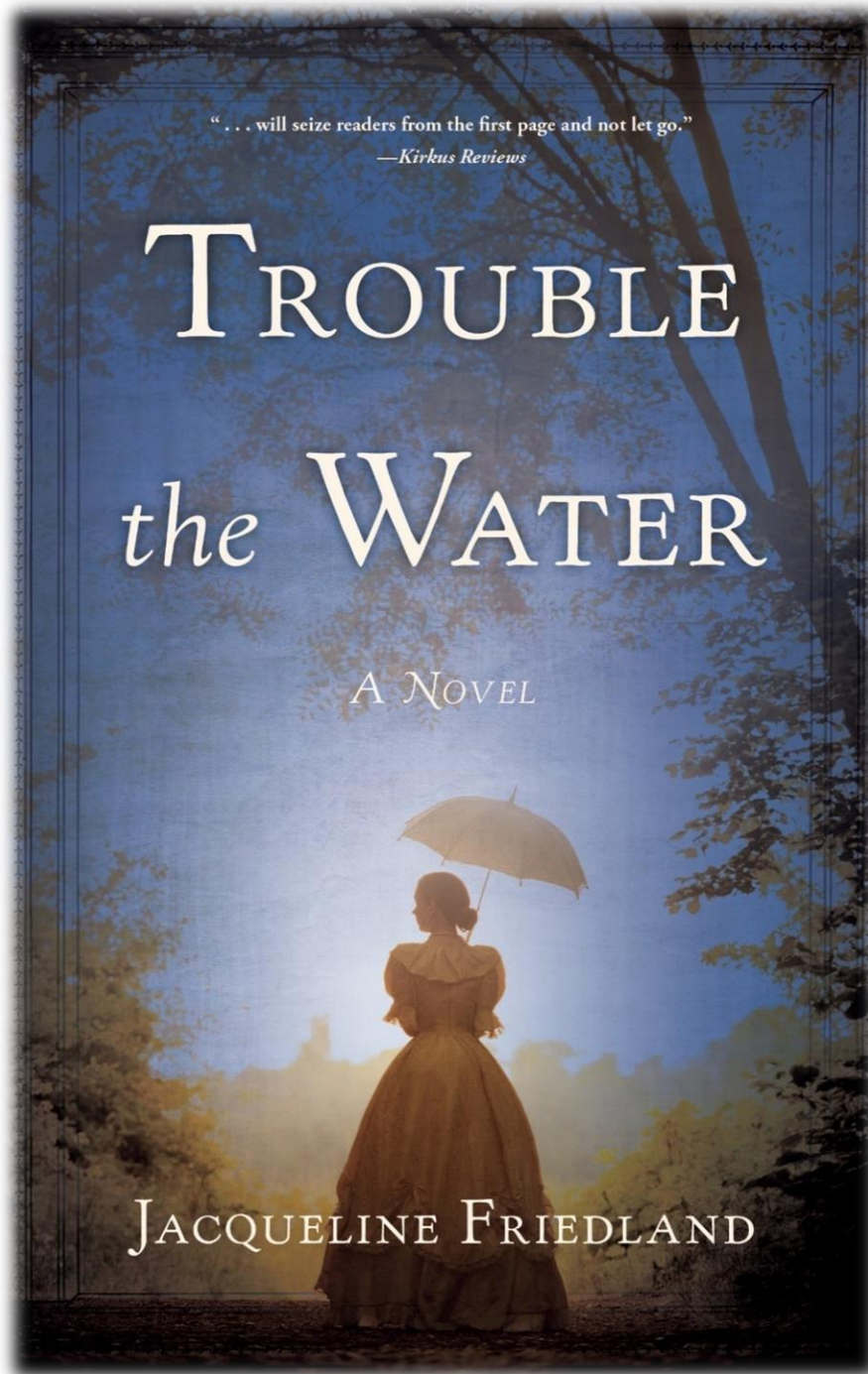


Reading Group Guide



ISBN 978-1-94300-654-0; \$16.95 U.S.; Trade paperback; 338 pages; 5.5" x 8.5"; Fiction/First Novel
E-book ISBN: 978-1-943006-55-7, \$9.95

Selected Praise & Kudos for TROUBLE THE WATER



A Parade.com Summer Reading Pick

A Brit & Co. Summer Reading Pick

A She Reads Summer Reading Pick

“... will seize readers from the first page and not let go.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Fans of Paulette Jiles and Julia Quinn **will adore this triumphant novel of intrigue, secrecy, and redemption.**"

—*Booklist*

"The complicated history of the antebellum South comes alive in Friedland's debut novel and offers readers **an exciting and fast-paced literary journey that explores complicated relationships, the importance of friendship, and the necessary power of love.**"

—**Kris Radish, best-selling author of *A Dangerous Woman From Nowhere***

"Friedland is a modern Bronte sister remixed with Kathleen Grissom or Leila Meacham. *Trouble the Water* is the riveting story of Abby, who travels across the sea, fleeing Liverpool, poverty, and an unsavory uncle, for Charleston, where a wealthy friend of her father, Douglas, lives. Douglas has pledged himself to the fight to end slavery, and for that, he has made the ultimate sacrifice. Abby fights inner demons and tries to find her place in Charleston high society while her brooding guardian reconciles the past and returns to his beloved cause. **Lovers of Civil War-era historical fiction will rejoice at Friedland's triumphant novel of love, friendship, and the most important issues of the day."**

—**Bethany Ball, author of *What to do About the Solomons***

"With a plucky heroine, a dashing hero, and the backdrop of the clandestine abolition movement in the antebellum South, Jacqueline Friedland masterfully weaves a tale full of passion and honor, duty and survival, evil and the beauty of basic human decency. *Trouble the Water* will make your heart pound and swell, and keep you reading well into the night. Highly recommended!"

—Loretta Nyhan, author of *I'll Be Seeing You, All the Good Parts, and Digging In*

“In a narrative tapestry woven of brilliant threads of history and Drama, Jacqueline Friedland introduces her readers to seventeen-year-old British born Abigail Milton, her generous but reluctant benefactor, Douglas Elling and the complex world of antebellum Charleston. The evil of slavery, the nascent abolitionist movement, the courage of an operative of the underground railroad are explored against the background of the vanished world of debutante cotillions, social intrigue and the slow maturity and melding of skillfully drawn protagonists. **Friedland’s research is impeccable, her writing fluid. “*Trouble the Water*” is that rare pedagogic novel that engages as it teaches.**”

—Gloria Goldreich, author of *The Bridal Chair*

Discussion Questions:

1. In *Trouble the Water*, we meet three characters trying to move on with their lives after suffering trauma. How do their traumas affect their personalities? How do their pasts affect their interactions with others?
2. Abby never wants to be beholden to anyone or to rely on anyone. Her independence means everything to her. Do you think this makes her more sensitive toward the cause of Abolition?
3. Discuss how parents are portrayed in this novel.
4. Friedland depicts a broad cross-section of women in her story: society belle, governess, mother, sister, charity case. What roles were open to women in the 1840's in America? In England? What do you think Abby's family hoped would happen to her when they sent her to America?
5. How do friends and friendships define this story?
6. Did you learn some things about the history of the pre-Civil War South that you had not known prior to reading the novel? What did you learn?
7. How, or how not, is historical fiction important to understanding our history?
8. Secrets play a determining role in the lives of key characters. Discuss.
9. Abby is a character that readers want to see succeed. What makes Abby so compelling?
10. The ending is a surprise. Did you see it coming? What do you foresee for the boys?
11. Why do you think Friedland chose the title of her book? How does it relate to the novel as a whole?

An Interview with Jacqueline Friedland



1. What sparked this story for you?

I've long been interested in the antebellum South, fascinated by the juxtaposition of the extreme cruelty of slave life and the glory of the stately plantation homes, the flamboyant clothing, the outrageous social conventions of the aristocratic planter class. When I began doing research into that historical era, I discovered that the international slave trade was outlawed in 1808, yet the illegal trafficking of slaves from Africa continued for decades thereafter with almost no repercussions for the perpetrators of these crimes. I started to wonder what would have happened if a vigilante stepped in to fight these traffickers? What if there had been a person, someone with sufficient resources and manpower, who could get himself out onto the open water and intercept these "Blackbirders", the illegal slave traders? I started to wonder who that person might be, what his life would like. I created the character Douglas Elling based on these ideas, and then I built the rest of the story around him.

2. How long did it take to do your research? What sources were most helpful?

It took me several years of research before I felt I had enough information to tell this story properly. I wanted to build the whole world in my mind before I started putting words on the page. As an author of historical fiction, I felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility to get the details right. I wasn't willing to put anything down on paper unless I knew that it was a feasible scenario for the time and place I was describing. Even after I began writing, there were many times I had to stop and spend a couple of months researching a specific question before I could pick up and move forward again. I found many sources helpful in this process, from other novels that take place in the same period, to primary sources and biographies. For anyone looking to learn more

about the abolitionist movement and those who led it, I especially recommend *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* by Henry Mayer.

3. You are revising a second novel, which is in a new genre. Why did you change genres? What are the differences for you in writing in a new genre? What are the differences in writing a second book?

The new book is contemporary fiction that takes place in Manhattan and the surrounding areas. I loved writing a historical novel, and I expect I will write others in the future. However, just as I read across many genres, I wanted to explore other genres in my writing, as well. I consider myself to be primarily a storyteller, and there are fascinating stories that could occur in both modern and historical times. I will admit that the contemporary fiction moves much more quickly for me because the quantity of research required (at least for the specific story I am working on) was vastly different than that which I had to complete for TTW. I expected there would be almost no research to this second project. As the story evolved, the requirement for research grew more than I had anticipated, and I ended up doing quite a bit of research. Even so, there were certain things that I could take for granted this time around. For example, I know exactly what a New York City subway station looks like, so I was able to write about things like that without having to devote hours and days to pouring over pictures and the like.

As far as writing a second book, in general, I would say only that it doesn't feel any easier. Each scene, each emotion, is as important, and therefore as challenging to write as the one that came before it.

4. You not only write but teach creative writing. What are one or two tips you would share with beginners?

There is a mantra in creative writing classes, "show, don't tell." I would start with that. Don't say "John felt defeated," when you can instead write that, "John's shoulders slumped, and he hung his head." Readers are smart enough to figure out what that means.

The second tip I would give is this: Don't be afraid to create your own world. Sometimes it feels like a risk to write things you haven't seen, to create a story all on your own. The beautiful part about writing is that you are the master of your world, and you have the power to declare exactly what that space, that universe of ideas, looks like. You are in charge, and you just have to remember to be brave.

5. What is your writing process?

I am a person who likes to outline. Before I start a new project, I always create several outlines and summaries. I draft and redraft the chronology and various details that seem crucial to the story. Once I start writing, however, I expect to veer off course, and I embrace the changes as they occur to me.

6. While writing TROUBLE THE WATER, what most surprised you?

I was most surprised by the fact that I knew when the story was finished. During earlier parts of the writing process, I felt like the tale could go on indefinitely, that

there were so many open-ended questions that I wanted to explore. I reached a point, however, where suddenly everything fell into place. Although there are still some questions about the future when the story ends, those questions are intentionally placed so that the readers can draw their own conclusions.

7. Will there be a sequel?

I was not planning to write a sequel, but so many people have been asking, that I am beginning to contemplate it. While there are no plans in the works at present, a sequel is not beyond the realm of possibility.

8. What is the reader response you most remember, and why?

I think my favorite reader response so far was when an acquaintance emailed me a photo of herself having just finished the book. The novel was clutched to her chest, and she had tears streaming down her face. To be able to touch a reader so deeply has been one of my greatest dreams as a writer, and I am utterly humbled to see that dream coming to fruition.

About the Author



JACQUELINE FRIEDLAND holds a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and a JD from NYU Law School. She practiced as an attorney in New York before returning to school to receive her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. She lives in New York with her husband, four children, and a tiny dog. This is her first novel.

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