



# The Water Dancer

Written by Ta-Nehisi Coates

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# The Water Dancer

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

## The Water Dancer Review

In his boldly imagined first novel, Ta-Nehisi Coates, the National Book Award-winning author of *Between the World and Me*, brings home the most intimate evil of enslavement: the cleaving and separation of families.

## The Water Dancer Coates

Young Hiram Walker was born into bondage. When his mother was sold away, Hiram was robbed of all memory of her but was gifted with a mysterious power. Years later, when Hiram almost drowns in a river, that same power saves his life. This brush with death births an urgency in Hiram and a daring scheme: to escape from the only home he's ever known.

## The Water Dancer Goodreads

So begins an unexpected journey that takes Hiram from the corrupt grandeur of Virginia's proud plantations to desperate guerrilla cells in the wilderness, from the coffin of the deep South to dangerously utopic movements in the North. Even as he's enlisted in the underground war between slavers and the enslaved, Hiram's resolve to rescue the family he left behind endures.

## The Water Dancer Book

This is the dramatic story of an atrocity inflicted on generations of women, men, and children—the violent and capricious separation of families—and the war they waged to simply make lives with the people they loved. Written by one of today’s most exciting thinkers and writers, *The Water Dancer* is a propulsive, transcendent work that restores the humanity of those from whom everything was stolen.

\*banging pots and pans together\* HELLO I'D LIKE TO BRING EVERYONE'S ATTENTION TO THIS BOOK WHICH IS DESCRIBED AS:

"A bracingly original vision of the world of slavery, written with the narrative force of a great adventure. Driven by the author's bold imagination and striking ability to bring readers deep into the interior lives of his brilliantly rendered characters, *The Water Dancer* is the story of America's oldest struggle--the struggle to tell the truth--from one of our most exciting thinkers \*banging pots and pans together\* HELLO I'D LIKE TO BRING EVERYONE'S ATTENTION TO THIS BOOK WHICH IS DESCRIBED AS:

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TAKE MY MONEY! ...more

## The Water Dancer A Novel

If you've read his non fiction than you know what a powerfully this author writes. I was so curious about his first first foray into fiction. Would it be as good, as powerful? For me the answer is yes.

This is a vividly portrayed and imaginative slave narrative. It takes place mostly in Virginia at a plantation called Lockless. Hiram is our narrator, he remembers little of his mother and he is the black son of the plantation owner. He also possesses a remarkable memory, and another unusual talen If you've read his non fiction than you know what a powerfully this author writes. I was so curious about his first first foray into fiction. Would it be as good, as powerful? For me the answer is yes.

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The slaves are called the tasked, and they yearn for connection, for freedom. Freedom takes an unusual turn here, and a little magical realism or substitution is employed. The characters, so many, even some of the quality are involved in the intense struggle for freedom. He also doesn't forget to mention all the disenfranchised, those yearning for a freedom not willing not given to them.

A truly remarkable first novel, wonderful characters, steady pacing and s little something different that sets it apart.

ARC from Netgalley.

...more

Review to come!

## The Water Dancer Release Date

3.5 stars rounded up to 4

Thanks to Netgalley and Random House Publishing Group for a digital galley in exchange for an honest review

If you've never experienced the beautiful magic of Ta-Nehisi Coates' writing, it's time to add him to your TBR. In his first steps into fiction, Coates brings us the tale of Hiram(Hi) Walker, a slave on a Virginia plantation in the mid-1800's. With little to no memory of his mother and the property of his white father, the owner of the plantation, Hiram soon finds

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I read this one at a fairly slow pace. A choice I made on purpose because of the seriousness of the subject matter. Coates shows the brutality of slavery, the dehumanizing nature in which people were "Tasked" and if they misbehaved or tried to escape were sold and sent "Natchez way."

A novel that I eagerly anticipated and one which I hope many will pick up and join the conversation.

Goodreads review published 02/09/19

Publication Date 24/09/19 ...more

4.5 Stars

A beautifully shared story of the history of slavery, a world built by those purchased or born of those referred to as the Tasked under the watchful eyes of their owners, those of the Quality. While this time and place are difficult to read about, there's a magical element to this that manages to create an atmosphere both hopeful and lovely, and helps to balance out the overall atmosphere.

• I am here, telling this story, and not from the grave, not yet, but from the here and now, peeri 4.5 Stars



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• I am here, telling this story, and not from the grave, not yet, but from the here and now, peering back into another time, when we were slaves, and close to the earth, and close to a power that baffled the scholars and flummoxed the Quality, a power, like our music, like our dance, that they cannot grasp, because they cannot remember. •

(To hear Ta-Nehisi Coates read this quote: <https://video.vanityfair.com/watch/ta...> )

There is something about the writing that feels as though every word is so deliberately chosen to perfectly convey the emotions, actions and environments throughout this story, while creating this occasionally magical aura at the same time.

There are multiple topics woven inside this novel about slavery, the breaking up of families as family members were sold off, the effect on those taken, and those left behind. The trauma of these losses affecting memories, affecting lives. Painful memories that Ta-Nehisi Coates shares with a tender compassion over time, while not sugar-coating any of the evilness of the actions, and allowing these characters, particularly Hiram, Hi, to not only remember but move beyond the pain associated with those memories. Love is another topic, both familial and romantic, and the precariousness of love for the Tasked.

This has been compared to Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*, since both have an "experimental" touch to them, but this was a much smoother read, for me. While Coates has written other non-fiction books, this is his debut novel, and I was impressed with how beautifully his passion shined through.

Pub Date: 24 Sep 2019

Many thanks for the ARC provided by Random House Publishing Group - Random House "One World ...more

## The Water Dancer Amazon

This is an absolutely beautiful book! The writing itself is stunning and a lot of work is put into absolutely every sentence. It deals with such heavy and heartbreaking topics and at times it is very hard to read, but also at times still feels optimistic that there are good things in this world worth fighting for such as love, family, connections, familiarity and home.

This book took me a while to read as it is very deep and character driven. This is a slow story that you are meant to take your time with. This is an absolutely beautiful book! The writing itself is stunning and a lot of work is put into absolutely every sentence. It deals with such heavy and heartbreaking topics and at times it is very hard to read, but also at times still feels optimistic that there are good things in this world worth fighting for such as love, family, connections, familiarity and home.

This book took me a while to read as it is very deep and character driven. This is a slow story that you are meant to take your time with and really absorb and understand. The story line is good and moves along at a good pace but the things that makes this book different from other books on this topic is first the focus on people's thoughts and inner workings. How they felt, how they thought, what made them make the choices that they did. The deep personal thoughts really make this book very powerful as you can relate to the characters on an intimate level, it goes deeper than just the everyday lives and experiences of a slave. Second, it goes deeper and more broad into the politics, the freeing of slaves and the north versus the south; how it all commingled. Previous books I have read usually just focus on one particular plantation or town and the atrocities that happened in everyday life.

There is a strong focus on the psychological effects of our experiences. Morality choices such as acting out of revenge and anger. Do they deserve it if they have seriously wronged you? Have you crossed a line? How every decision you make can snowball and unknowingly affect so many lives. Really separating what you think is best for somebody compared to what they want for themselves. How much your understanding of life, relationships and feelings change as you mature and experience more of life. It leaves you with a lot of things to think about and really ponder on.

Of all the horrible things that were done to slaves, I must say that the thought of taking a mother's children away from her, really hits me hard. I had a really hard time reading that. I cannot even imagine having my children taken from me. Even writing those words my eyes are tearing up.

Not sure about the magical realism parts of the book. I go back and forth on whether I liked that aspect or not. I feel like it is used as a portrayal of how our memories and experiences hold onto us and how important they are to help guide us in our future, but I personally felt like it took away from the story a bit. At times it confused me and I had to stop and get out of the story to think about it and I think it also slightly makes the true history of how hard people had to fight to get free seem a bit too easy.

It is very obvious that a lot of work and research has gone into this book. The level of detail and

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understanding in his writing is amazing. A book I will absolutely not soon forget and definitely recommend. This will be a top seller, I am sure.

Thank you so much to Netgalley and Random House Publishing Group for my ARC. ...more

4+stars

At its core, this novel is a story of slavery, the shameful injustice, horrific treatment of human beings, of the amazing guts and guile of the people in the Underground transporting people to freedom, in the south of the 1860s. This is such a powerful story depicting the life of slaves on a tobacco plantation in Virginia, highlighting throughout the gut wrenching separation of children from their mothers, separation of fathers and children, husbands and wives. The writing is beautiful in so many places that I

found myself rereading passages.

It's a complex story infused with magical realism. It's a creatively written story, but the magical realism wasn't a problem for me given the beautiful prose when I found myself in these instances of "Conduction". I do admit that I was a little confused at times about the Underground as portrayed here. Hiram Walker, called Hi, a slave, son of the plantation owner has the gift of memory, the ability to recall everything he sees and hears and reads when he learns to read, except one thing. He can't remember his mother, sold by his father when Hi was nine years old. Hi has another gift, one he struggles to understand until he finds a place as an agent on the Underground. On Hi's journey we meet a large cast of characters, some are courageous, some will touch your heart and there were some that I just couldn't understand, but the journey is an amazing one. This isn't a book for everyone because the magical realism may not be for you, but it's an important and beautifully written story of slavery unlike anything I've read. It will hit you in the gut as it should and the characters will touch your heart with its depiction of family, of love, and the desire to be free.

I received an advanced copy of this book from Random House/One World through NetGalley. ...more

## The Water Dancer Book Tour

SPREAD THE WORD!

START A RIOT!

RUN THROUGH THE STREETS

THIS BOOK NEEDS TO WILL CERTAINLY BECOME A BESTSELLER

Ta-Nehisi Coates is a genius.

(Seriously, he's got the MacArthur Fellowship to prove it.) I've read a lot of his previous work in The Atlantic, along with Between the World and Me, so I was excited to find out that he's chosen to branch out into historical fiction with The Water Dancer. He's a gifted writer, and his talent shines in any genre in which he chooses to write.

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The first thing that struck me in The Water Dancer was the level of detail in each sentence. It's obvious that Coates informed his writing with thorough research, and he used this knowledge to infuse each line with details that vividly depict both the setting (antebellum America) and his characters' thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

The sentences themselves are carefully crafted and often complex to digest what was happening, I had to slow my reading speed considerably. This isn't because the prose is difficult, but more so because every sentence has a purpose. (There's no filler material here, so don't expect a light and fluffy beach read, and don't expect to be able to skim.) Although it took work to read The Water Dancer, I was driven to find out where narrator Hiram Walker's story would lead.

The other striking thing about The Water Dancer is that while it details the cruelty and heartbreak of separating enslaved families, it remains optimistic at its core. The light mysticism/magic in the story is metaphorical. I think the intended message is that we must share common narratives and work toward things that are larger than ourselves. Only then can we move forward without erasing the lessons of the past.

## The Water Dancer

I loved reading the text of *The Water Dancer*, and done correctly, I think it has the potential to be a truly fantastic audiobook. Music is fundamental to this narrative, so careful treatment of the excerpts mentioned in the text could make this a stunning audio presentation. I'm interested in hearing what the publisher does with it.

Thanks to Random House and NetGalley for providing me with a DRC of this novel, which will be available for purchase on September 24th. ...more

## The Water Dancer Kirkus

Who is *The Water Dancer*? Early on in this lyrical tale we see images of black women dancing with jugs of water perched upon their heads, moving to release the tensions of their lives and celebrate the sense of family and community they share with one another despite their circumstances. It isn't until much later that we see another water dancer, a true historical figure, and then, finally, another. He is the book's central character, Hiram Walker.

Hiram Walker is a child when we first meet him. Who is *The Water Dancer*? Early on in this lyrical tale we see images of black women dancing with jugs of water perched upon their heads, moving to release the tensions of their lives and celebrate the sense of family and community they share with one another despite their circumstances. It isn't until much later that we see another water dancer, a true historical figure, and then, finally, another. He is the book's central character, Hiram Walker.

Hiram Walker is a child when we first meet him, and all is revealed through his eyes, thoughts, and emotions. He shows us the unspeakable cruelties of slavery. He refers to as himself and his fellow slaves as "the Tasked." The oppressors he calls "Quality." Other whites who do not own slaves are the "Low." As the illegitimate biracial son of the estate owner, he moves between the two worlds, yet he has no power, no freedom. I had never before read any work by Coates, and I was enthralled. He writes with so much care and attention. Intention. The plantation is called Lockless. The Deep South, where slavery rules, is "the Coffin." The slave quarters are "the Street." There is a key figure called "Moses."

As Hiram's life changes, so does he. The people he meets, the challenges he masters, and the relationships he forges morph him from a boy into a man. At one point, Hiram states that to task is to wear a mask. Being with folks in the Underground helped him find his true self and made him feel like he was with family. *The Water Dancer* may be set in the 1800s with at least one real historical figure, but it is so much more than historical fiction. It is filled with allegory and symbolism. It is a tale of struggle to overcome cruelty and bondage. It is the saga of humanity's thirst for freedom and equality. It is also about hope, because despite the harsh conditions and inhumane treatment, this book is filled with dreams for a better future. There is so much pain and suffering, but there is also love and joy. There are so many memorable characters, Task, Quality, and free. Some are good-hearted. Some are not. All are part of Hiram Walker's story.

This book brought me to tears. Tears for what so many suffered. Tears for the injustices now in our country, at our border, and throughout the world.

When Hiram's mother was sold, his memories of her were stolen along with her. In order to reach his full potential, Hiram must retrieve and face his deepest, most painful memories. This is where Ta-Nehisi Coates truly shines. He paints several amazing scenes to prepare us for that final moment. The imagery is simple, yet creative and tremendously powerful.

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The Water Dancer

I wonder if Mr. Coates is challenging us all to face our deepest fears as individuals and as a nation so that we can shake off the chains that restrain us and become freer, more loving, and more generous. Hiram Walker is a very well spoken young man with beautiful heart and soul. We should listen to his story with our whole beings. It is not a swift, easy read, but it is a wondrous piece of literature.

My thanks to NetGalley, One World, and the author for this ARC in exchange for my unbiased review.

5 stars ...more

"...the story of America's oldest struggle-the struggle to tell the truth..."

This sounds so good, I can't believe it isn't on more people's radar!