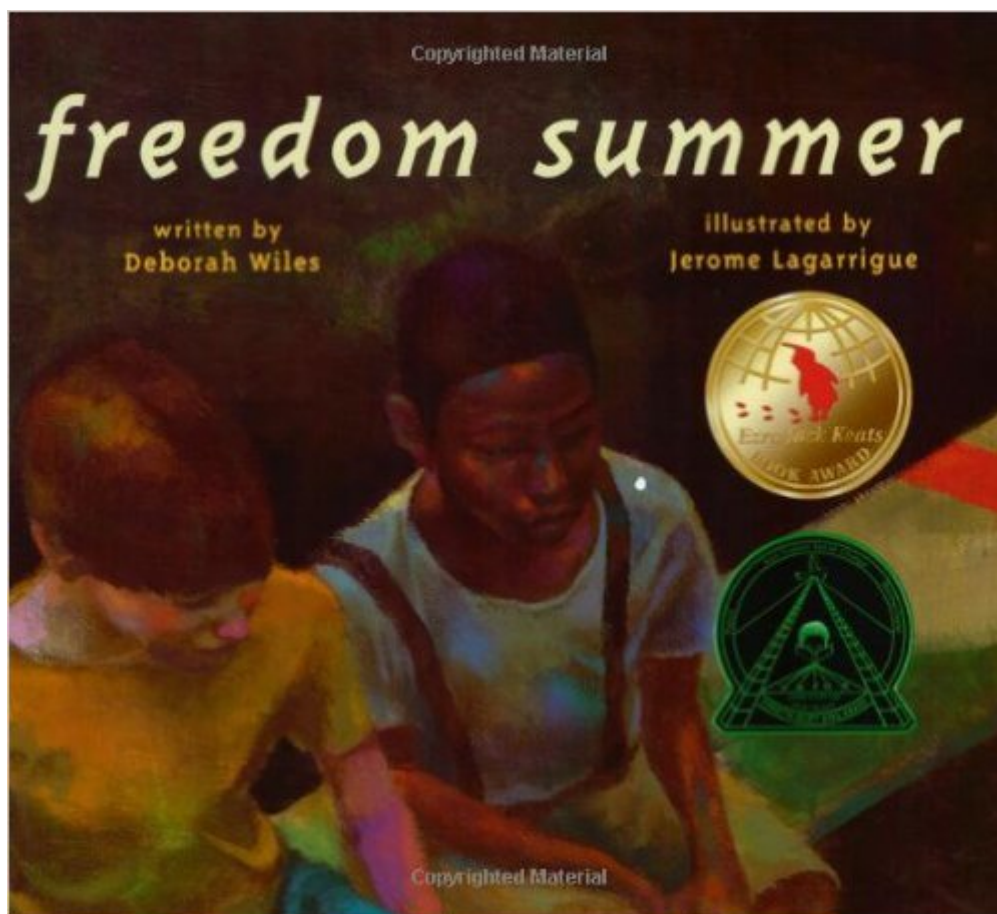


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# Freedom Summer



## 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

Publisher: Aladdin; Reprint edition (January 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 068987829X

ISBN-13: 978-0689878299

Product Dimensions: 10 x 0.2 x 9 inches

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

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (54 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #38,698 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in [Books > Children's Books >](#)

[Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism](#) #65 in [Books >](#)

[Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s](#) #108

in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > African-American](#)

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

This is a very evocative book about racism and hatred. Here's this boy, excited to play in the pool for the first time - and he can't. The city was so upset about integration that they filled the pool with concrete rather than let black people swim there. Terrible. This book is realistic, and we can always use more books about history. It's well-written, I like the artwork. But... See, now, I have to ask this. Here's this book about integration, about hatred, about racism. It features a white boy and his black best friend. Best friend's big brother makes an appearance, too. The best friend is the one who feels

heartbroken, he's the one who's suffering here...So why is the white kid the narrator?Is this story of friendship, and of hatred, really his story to tell? Why couldn't John Henry have told his own story?

Joe and John Henry are best friends. They both love to play marbles, eat ice pops and swim in Fiddler's Creek. And, when they grow up, they're both planning to be firemen. But as Joe tells it there is one big difference between them... "John Henry's skin is the color of browned butter" and "my skin is the color of the pale moths that dance around the porch light at night." In the early 1960's, there are some things they just can't do together. John Henry's not allowed to swim in the town pool or buy his ice pops at Mr Mason's General Store. But all that is about to change. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act becomes law and segregation has to end. The town's swimming pool will be open to everyone, together and John Henry and his family will be able to shop at Mr Masons. The boys are so excited they can hardly sleep and race to the town pool extra early so that they can be there when it opens. But instead of cool blue water, they find workmen filling the pool with asphalt..... Deborah Wiles has written a gentle, yet powerful story of one small southern town's struggle with integration, as seen through the eyes of her white narrator, Joe. Her beautiful, heart-felt text, combined with Jerome Lagarrigue's stunning artwork will pull your children into the story and let them become part of Joe and John Henry's experience. Freedom Summer is a story of racism, friendship and the triumph of the human spirit, told with great insight and wisdom. A story you won't soon forget.

History comes alive in this book. Freedom Summer puts names and faces to one of the most intense struggles our country has ever faced. It tells of two young boys who go against the flow and dare to be friends. The language is poetic and moving. Before you know it you're walking down the street with the characters. You see what they see and you feel what they feel. This book is something I will read to my children and I hope that one day they pull it off the shelf and read it to their children because it is a story of enduring quality, and it is a story that needs to be told and remembered.

FREEDOM SUMMER is an amazing picture book. It's warm, child-centered, but also serious and meaningful. When I showed it recently to a children's librarian her comment was simply, "Wow!" This is a book to treasure, to read to your children, to share with students. It's a reminder that racism affects all children and that friendship is to be treasured.

Look, I don't want to stir a whole pot here, but this story should have been told by John Henry, the black friend. Instead this is a book that notices suffering through whites' perspective. I mean, it's great that they are friends and get along so well, but how well does Joe really understand his BEST FRIEND John Henry's world? Because he only just realized how important it was to be equal -- he never noticed it before? I am sorry, because I wanted more from this book. Love the illustrations.\*\* update \*\*I note that I am not the first commenter to point this out. This is a great book, but I think it is told from the wrong perspective. Ulyyf "connie" made a similar observation in her review before I wrote my own.

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