



Trouble the Water

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From the award-winning author of *Dovey Coe* comes a sweeping tale of the friendship between a black girl and a white boy and the prejudices they must overcome in segregated Celeste, Kentucky, as the pair try to solve the mysteries surrounding a lonely old dog.

Eleven-year-old Callie is fearless, stubborn, and a little nosy. So when she sees an old yellow dog wandering around town by itself, you can bet she's going to figure out who he belongs to. But when her sleuthing leads her to cross paths with a white boy named Wendell who wants to help, the segregated town doesn't take too kindly to their budding friendship.

Meanwhile, a nearly invisible boy named Jim is stuck in a cabin in the woods. He's lost his dog, but can't remember exactly when his pup's disappeared. When his companion, a little boy named Thomas, who's been invisible much longer than he, explains that they are ghosts, the two must figure out why they can't seem to cross the river to the other side just yet...

And as Callie and Wendell's search for the old dog brings them closer and closer to the cabin in the woods, the simmering prejudices of the townspeople boil over.

Trouble the Water is a story that spans lifetimes, showing that history never truly disappears, and that the past will haunt us until we step up to change the present and stand together for what is right.

Trouble the Water Details

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From Reader Review Trouble the Water for online ebook

Alli Burke says

This quiet and powerful story is about a time in history when the smallest thing would cause a big problem. This story took place 1953 Kentucky, when segregation is still alive, and a white boy, Wendell, and black girl, Cassie became quick friends while following a mysterious old dog, even though they know they aren't supposed to be seen together. Dowell is able to build up the ending in an optimistic way and gives hope to the readers in a realistic way, which is why it is considered a magical realism genre book, with ghosts and imagination. The short chapters and detailed descriptions make it easy to read through even without illustrations.

Format: Chapter book

Deborah Bancroft says

Love this author. Want to read more of her.

Yvonne Stewart says

This book has all the elements to keep a young reader engaged. It does a great job of introducing racial inequality and how it can affect children. The plot has mystery and historical elements as well. Slavery is discussed in an effective but not brutal manner. I think it's just enough to get a reader interested in learning more about the history of slavery. I really like the character of Callie: strong, sassy, and smart.

Mary says

Simply amazing.

Jan says

This was one terrific read about an interracial friendship between a black girl and a white boy in Kentucky during the time before the Civil Rights Movement. The story spoke to me in ways I really can't describe other than I just really loved everything about it. And the fact that so much of the story centered around a beautiful and aging dog made it all the more heartwarming.

Addison Children's Services says

Both Callie and Wendell are curious about the old dog who's been wandering around their town of Celeste, Kentucky, but neither knows who the dog belongs to. An almost invisible boy named Jim knows the dog is his, but no one seems to realize Jim exists, perhaps not even Buddy, his dog who tried to save him on that day long ago. The trouble is, Jim can't really remember that day. He doesn't know why he keeps drifting back to the old cabin in the woods. And why does the other boy in the cabin keep trying to tell Jim that he's no longer alive? Callie is determined to solve the mystery of Buddy, as well as find the old cabin. Will Wendell be able to help Callie in her quest? And will the rest of the townsfolk be angry if Wendell, a white boy, is helping Callie, an African-American girl?

Diane says

"Sometime you have to trouble the water, Callie."

In Celeste, Kentucky there is "An uneasy peace between white and colored." But that is about to change. They have built a swimming pool, paid for with taxpayer's money, but open to whites only.

Into this turbulent time come two characters who play change agents without even really realizing it. Callie Robinson is an African American girl full of spunk and fire. Her policy is that "someone gave you grief, you had to give grief right back." Her parents warn her that this attitude can be dangerous in a segregated town, but she can't help it. It's just the way she is. She's also looking for a good mystery to solve. Ever since she submitted an article to Mr. Renfrow, the editor of the *Weekly Advance*, about thefts on Church Street, Callie has been itching to do more investigative reporting. Maybe the old yellow dog could lead her to a story. She just can't find him.

Enter Wendell Crow. His family lives on the outskirts of town. He spends his days fishing, looking at comic books at the drugstore and roaming around with King, his dog. Some day he would like to locate the cabin in the woods not far from the river that his Dad reminisces about. It is down by the river that he first spots the old yellow dog. It is also by the river that he meets Callie for the first time. Though their exchange is curt and somewhat uncomfortable for both of them, the next time Wendell sees the dog, he knows he must tell Callie. Together they go after the yellow dog and end up finding the cabin together. The cabin that Callie knows hid runaway slaves at one time who were waiting to cross the river. But when the two enter into the cabin, it's cold and they get an odd feeling about it. "... why won't your dog come in? I'll tell you why. He's feeling the same thing I am. Like this is someone else's place." They find the name "Jim" carved into the wall. Who could that be? Callie is certain that there is a connection between the old dog, the cabin and "Jim" and she is determined to find out what that connection is.

Enter Jim Trebble, the "almost invisible boy" and Thomas. Jim isn't quite sure how he arrived at the cabin. He just "woke up to find himself in the cabin." Thomas has tried to talk to Jim, but Jim doesn't seem to be able to hear him.

But people are watching. As Callie and Wendell walk around town together with the dog, people are noticing them together. Since when did a colored girl and a white boy walk down the street together? Is that really proper? Is it a coincidence that the cabin catches fire? Or is it a message?

Doris says

This book was based on history, and had many elements that intrigued me, including the South with the racial tensions and how various groups of people dealt with that. It also had ghosts, which was intriguing.

The story was told of 11-year old Callie, a black girl, and her interactions with people around her as she searches for the owners of a lost old dog. In some ways Callie seems almost adult in her observations, then childish in others, particularly in regards to racial tension - but enlivening all the same.

Also was a white boy named Wendell, about the same age as Callie, who helps in the quest to find the poor dog's owner.

Others appeared, such as Ray, a bigot with a violent tendency even though he is around the same age, and Orin, a man with a mission to improve the world and integrate his town, and our ghosts.

Wonderfully done story, with the only detractions being some of the language seemed out of place for the characters given their location and backgrounds. For example - colors - aquamarine is a lovely color but I can't picture an 11-year-old thinking a younger girl's bathing suit is a pretty shade of aquamarine.

Gwyneth says

In this work of magical realism, a young African American girl named Callie sets out to uncover the mystery surrounding a stray dog and an abandoned cabin in the woods in the town of Celeste, Kentucky. Set in 1953, during segregation, Callie crosses social boundaries when she develops an unlikely friendship with a young white boy named Wendell. By the end of the story, the duo finds that together they just might be able to accomplish what feels impossible. Without any illustrations, Dowell relies on descriptive language to convey the story to the reader. Form: Chapter Book.

Mary Sanchez says

It's 1953 and eleven-year-old Callie wants to learn who the yellow dog that's wandering her Celeste, Kentucky town belongs to. She's determined to write an article for the local black newspaper once she does her detective work. Callie wants to learn the dog's story so she heads towards the river, while a white boy, Wendall, is following his own leads about an old hidden cabin near the river, when they meet. They join forces for the day to search for the dog and the cabin.

What Callie and Wendall don't know is that there are two invisible ghost boys living in the cabin. Later, when Callie digs through old newspapers, she learns a boy drowned in the river some years past and he had a dog that fit the description of the dog she and Wendall have seen. One of the ghost boys is that very boy who can't understand why he's stuck in a cabin and how he lost his dog. The other ghost boy has been invisible longer and used the cabin as part of an underground railroad escape route when he was alive.

Callie and Wendall pair up to do more investigations, because they're learning they have to rely on each other, unlike their townsfolk who pretend to trust each other but are really just trying to not trouble the water. However, the waters do get troubled when Mr. Renfrow, the editor of the black newspaper, writes an

editorial about the need to integrate the town pool.

The voices of Callie, Wendall, the two ghost boys, and Mr. Renfrow stir the waters of history and the present in this well told story.

Dianna Winget says

This is an honest and engaging story of an interracial friendship in pre-civil rights Kentucky. It offers some important and thought provoking perspectives for young readers to consider. Recommended for ages 8-12.

Bluepersuasion says

Wow!! I loved this book...I could barely put it down. It's everything kids love: dogs, ghosts, investigating! Very well-written and engaging!

C Grannell says

Set in segregated Kentucky in 1953, Callie (African American) and Wendell (white) become unlikely friends. They want to solve the mysteries of the old dog that appeared in town, and the hidden cabin in the woods.

A fantasy, and a difficult read because there are two "ghosts" waiting to "cross over." You also understand the dog's thoughts.

Interesting combination of fantasy and historical fiction.

Sam says

Huge thank you to Simon & Schuster Canada for this ARC!

This was a book that wasn't on my radar at all and it was sent to me unsolicited. I am a sucker for dogs being on the cover of books and this book is a few things: it's a story of a dog becoming loved, two children from different sides of the fence becoming friends, and an issue of racism that is being propelled in segregated Celeste, Kentucky.

I adored this book and I loved its approach to a tougher middle grade subject matter. The friendship between Callie and Wendell is so beautiful and raw, and I love their connection to this dog who ends up lost. In fact, how the story of the dog was handled was quite lovely, very mysterious, as well. There's an interesting ghost

story and I won't spoil this, but it was such a fascinating storyline that's a part of the novel. SO GOOD.

And then there's the segregation plotline, which was well researched and really done well. The town hates the friendship between Callie and Wendell, and it gets to levels where it's so heartbreakingly sad how they are treated. In fact, how racism effects the children just made me so sad at times. The ending is satisfying though, and it reminds readers about a point in time that was so horrible, and how even now how things still need to improve. This one is definitely worth powering through, as everything about it left me thoughtful. Check this one out!

DaNae says

Sometimes quiet stories are the strongest.
