



A Desperate Road to Freedom: The Underground Railroad Diary of Julia May Jackson, Virginia to Canada West, 1863-1864

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Julia May and her family have done the unthinkable. They have fled from their life of slavery on a tobacco plantation in Virginia and are making their way north, on foot, where they have heard that slaves can be free. The journey takes them through swamps, travelling by night and hiding by day. The diary that Julia May keeps is another act of bravery. Learning to read and write alongside her mistress at the plantation was her own secret and forbidden as a slave. Julia May's diary records her fears and the extraordinary things she sees during her voyage and keeps her going through the hard times until they are finally free.

A Desperate Road to Freedom: The Underground Railroad Diary of Julia May Jackson, Virginia to Canada West, 1863-1864 Details

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Sarah Lonsdale says

I don't usually like reading diary material.... But reading about her hard life and her extraordinary experience made me reflect on my life..... I just finished learning about the slaves in school so this just topped it all off.... It was the best book ever... I loved learning about how they ran away and how so many people helped them.... I wish I was alive back then to help them... They were such a loving family and u am so very glad that they found Sarah and Tomous came home from the war

Sha says

Nice book, with a few lovely moments. I do like slice of life/survival stories. No other book in the Dear America/Canada series so far has managed to capture the sheer Emotional Impact of A Picture of Freedom: The Diary of Clotee, a Slave Girl, Belmont Plantation, Virginia 1859, though. So everything is rated relative to that.

Twyla says

In this book Julia May Jackson travels to Canada to escape slavery and the war. My favourite part in this book was when they all were happy at the end. The worst part was when the family was still in Toronto and they ran into their old master from when they were still slaves

Callie says

loved it!!!!de

Meghan says

More like 3.5 stars but I'm going to be generous. First of all, the grammar was not authentic. Julia May sounded much more learned than she would have been especially at the start. Other than the town they ended up in being the terminus for the Underground Railroad, this book had little to do with Canada. I also felt like in the historical note the author made it sound like the US was the only country that had slaves after the 1830's, which is definitely not the case. I would have felt better if the book was written by an American author, but seeing as this is a Canadian series that would be pushing it.

Sara says

Not bad. A light read and a good one to introduce younger generations to the Underground Railroad and Slavery.

Student Symmes says

Review by: Melissa Murphy (SPOILER!!!)

What was your least favourite part in the book?

My least favourite part was the beginning. It was very boring. Even when they were running from their masters. When she was writing her diary entries they were short and with no date on them. She continued on like that for until they got to the safe place. They were also short because she was not supposed to know how to read or write.

Did the book fulfil your expectation?

The book indeed fulfilled my expectation. It was very fun and page-turning! When they got to Canada and found their masters wife and daughter, thought they would have been forced back to Virginia. It fulfilled my expectation a lot.

How did the book compare?

‘Orphan at my door’ was very different despite them both taking place in Canada. One was about a home girl and another was a run-away slave.

Did the book end the way you wanted?

Yes, well mostly. It ended with Julia’s mother giving birth to her sister. She always wanted to be the best big sister like Sarah was to her before she was sold.

How would the book have been different if it had taken place in a different place?

If this book had taken place in a different time like 35 years before Julia would not have even been allowed in Canada. If anyone knew she was a run-away they would have sent her back to Virginia.

What was your favourite part?

My favourite part was when Sarah returned. She ran with her husband and daughter it was so sweet I just about died!!

Rate the book 1-5?

I will rate the book a 3. I will rate it a three because it was not very descriptive. She did not really talk about the characters. It was also boring at some parts.

What was the book about?

It was about a run-away slave named Julia. Julia’s sister, Sarah and her brothers Caleb and Daniel were sold to other slave owners. At the end of the book, Sarah is reunited with her family. The book is mainly about them getting to Canada and trying to stay safe!!

Did you enjoy the book?

I did enjoy the book very much. It was full of page-turning excitement!

Would you recommend this book?

Yes I would. This book was very exciting. A story of backstabbing friend's racist masters and a railroad to safety. This book would be very fun to read and I recommend it to everyone!(10)

What did I learn?

The one main thing I learnt was that there is always room for mistakes in friendship but there is always room for forgiveness. When Julia's white friend is racist she has room for forgiveness in her heart!

What about the plot?

I did not have to force myself to read it at all. It was one of the best books I've ever read. I can easily say that it was better than twilight. The plot sucked me in and just when I thought it would be boring it just got better!! It is a must read!

Where the characters realistic?

They were very realistic. It was also very detailed in the actions of the characters. Like how Thomas wanted revenge on the slave masters so he went to war against them. Lots of coloured men did that. The author obviously based it on historical facts.

Witch characters would you like to meet?

I would like to meet Sarah and ask her about how she felt when she was taken from her family. I would also ask her how she found out that her family would be in Toronto. I would like to also meet Thomas to get more information on why he went to war and how he got wounded!

Did the actions seem plausible?

I think the actions were plausible but not now a day. The main family had to travel on foot from Virginia to Canada. Our population now is way too lazy to walk from Virginia to Canada

Cheriee Weichel says

Julia May Jackson was born a slave in Virginia just before the American Civil War. She is slave to the masters daughter and unbeknownst to anyone, has learned to read and write. Three older siblings have been sold, and there are rumors that her older brother, Thomas, will soon be next. Late one dark night her parents wake her, tell her to grab her things and keep quiet. It is the beginning of the family's journey along the Underground Railroad to freedom in Canada. Julia May keeps a journal of their experiences – a journal that could cause serious repercussions should it fall into the wrong hands.

This book had a strong beginning that grabbed my attention and pulled me into the story. Julia May is a spunky spirited girl who I liked a lot. I desperately wanted her family's journey to be successful. They make it to Toronto, but while free, are still in danger of being kidnapped by slave hunters. Eventually they move to Owen Sound where they put down roots.

I really liked how this book portrayed history in an exciting format. I knew something about the underground railway of course, but this book helps us to understand more about what it was like once these people made it to Canada. They may have been 'free,' but they still faced considerable prejudice once they arrived.

This is a great addition to the Dear Canada series!

Rebecca says

Eleven-year-old Julia May is more fortunate than most slaves in the southern states during the Civil War. As a young girl, her owner assigned her to be the personal slave and companion of his young daughter, Miss Marissa, and so Julia May didn't have to endure working in the fields of the plantation. Julia May learned to read and write while listening to Marissa's lessons. Marissa didn't care that her slave was educated, and kept Julia May's secret so that Julia May could help her with her schoolwork, and even gave her scraps of paper to practice writing on. Julia May uses these precious pieces of paper to start a diary of her life.

In January 1863, after learning Julia May's older brother, Thomas, might be sold to another plantation, Julia May's parents decide the family will escape to freedom. Three of Julia May's older siblings were already sold, and her mother can't bear to lose another one of her children. In the dead of winter the family makes a dangerous escape, and takes refuge at a Union Army fort. However, to ensure their freedom no matter what the outcome of the war is, her parents decide they will continue north to Canada, where slavery has been completely outlawed and runaway slaves cannot be returned to their owners. Julia May writes in her diary about her family's dangerous journey north as well as the first year of their new, free life in Canada as she makes new friends, goes to school for the first time in her life, and worries about her brother Thomas, who has gone back to fight in the war.

This was another good book from the Dear Canada series that should be enjoyed by fans of the series as well as the similar Dear America series. I really enjoyed reading Julia May's diary, she was a likeable character, the historical setting and details were really interesting, and the story kept me interested at all times. Although this book was not one of my most favorite books from the Dear Canada series, I did really enjoy it and I recommend it to all fans of the series.

Jocelyn says

Slaves are seen as objects that are used and owned by the white, but why does it have to be that way? We live being scared everyday and the unaware of were our brothers and sisters were sold too. With the heavy labor upon our backs. Being not aloud to read or write, learn, go to school, or be independent and have our own lives. That's why we are running, but scared we will be caught. Panicking and shivers run up my spine, where will we land next?

The book is very realistic, and keeps you wanting to read more. When I'm reading this book I feel like I am watching a movie because of how descriptive the writing is. The author makes it so realistic by how the layout of the sentences are put. I personally think that the book gets boring where they are in the wagon, because nothing interesting happens at this time. Since the family runs for a while it gets confusing on what is happening, for example, when they end up staying with the longs. Sometimes I need to read back to figure that out who is who because the story introduces so many characters. I like how the book is put into a diary format.

I enjoy this story, because it is very interesting to read how our history was like. The story has lots of emotion and paints a picture in your head of how it was back then. I cannot relate to this story because I have never experienced it before. But I can tell it must of been very hard for her and her family to have had to experience such trauma. This story connects with present day because unfortunately we still deal with color stereotypes and racism. In my opinion, the book can be a bit bias at times, by the way it is written shows that the majority of white people are racist. But I do understand that it is in her point of view.

People who like true events or learning about black history might enjoy this book. That is why I find this book very interesting.

Young Adult Historical Vault says

Karleen Bradford gives us a wonderful story that's half adventure story and half settler's narrative. The characters are all interesting and complex in their own ways, and she deals with era-appropriate racism in an age-appropriate way. A great entry into the Dear Canada series.

For my full review including spoilers, check out Young Adult Historical Vault.
<https://yahistoricalvault.com/2017/05...>

Shanelle says

Another book from the Dear Canada series, A Desperate Road to Freedom focusses on the Underground Railroad that helped save many lives. This book follows the story of Julia May Jackson and her family as they escaped from their past lives as slaves to the new world, Canada.

Nicola Mansfield says

Karleen Bradford is a well-known and talented Canadian historical fiction writer for youth and teens. Needless to say, this is an entertaining and interesting addition the Dear Canada series. This particular book could be best suited to the younger end of the 8-12 age range as it is a basic story of American slaves escaping using the Underground railroad, then the troubles and successes they experience settling down in a community in Canada. The majority of the book takes place in Owen Sound, Ontario. The only weakness is that this story only barely touches upon the horrors the slaves endured and the 'escape'/Underground Railroad part of the story is over by page 25. The rest of the book deals with their Canadian experience. Bradford does manage to cover many topics in this presupposing book: the eldest brother joins the Union army once he reaches freedom, the family had three older children sold off and that effect on the family is pursued, the blacks are welcomed seemingly so open-armed at first but later a white attitude of jobs being lost to them starts to prevail, friendships between white and black children, integration between the races in general but only to a point of "knowing their place and limitations" and also the kidnapping of free slaves by bounty hunters because of the US Fugitive Slave Law. The historical note is a simple history of the Civil War, the underground railroad and the black communities in Toronto and Owen Sound. A good, well-written, atmospheric, introduction to the topic.

Shanelle says

I really enjoyed reading this book and since the first time that I had read it, my overall opinion of the story has changed. I loved reading about all of the changes that occurred in Julia May's life as it had kept myself engaged throughout the story. I definitely recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading about history, as well as the history of Canada.

Teri Pre says

This seems like it will be a good series. It's written for young readers, maybe 3rd or 4th graders, and will give students a better understanding of history since the books are written from a young person's perspective.
