



**NANCY:** A beautifully written, lyrical, political, and mystical work. I first read Coates in his famous article “The Case for Reparations” published in the Atlantic Monthly, a well-researched uncovering of the historic and continued oppression of African-Americans in the United States. In this book, he uncovers the roots of American racism, exposing the evil of the plantation system, as well as the triumphs and work of those enslaved.



**KATHARINE:** This work adds so much to an inside look at slavery. I think it should be required reading for those studying early American history. It challenges us to deal with the reality of racism, to look at the Underground Railroad, and the decline of the plantation system. And from the point of view of the “tasked” provides a powerful perspective.



**PRISCILLA:** Oh my, this unveiled the southern belle, didn't it? I thought perhaps Corinne was the proper antebellum lady, but she was fooling all of them. Where is propriety? This dismantles all that I thought about their society. It's very disturbing.



**JANE:** Now I loved the strong women in this book. Harriet Tubman aka Moses, Wasn't she something? And Corrine? They did some amazing things. Even Sophia in her own way was a strong one, and Thena too. They teach me you shouldn't just settle for the status quo. Ladies, get busy!



**MOLLY:** Thank you, Ta-Nehishi. Thank You! If you really read this book, I think you'll get it. Do you see how Hiram was smarter than most of the people around him and still that wasn't enough? I loved his triumph in the end. Such a work of art. As an African-American, I say Yes! Yes! Yes! Great work.



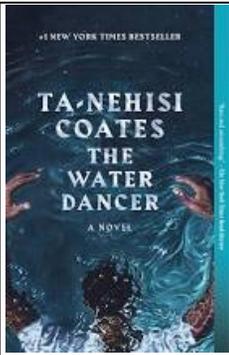
**ABIGAIL:** The plantation owners didn't honor the land and that led to their decline. Environmental nightmares can be avoided if we start to respect the Earth. Or we can watch our civilization decline, the way of the South in the past, and the way we are headed for our whole country if we don't start making changes now.



**SALLIE:** The pain for these children born in slavery never goes away. I can't say I loved it, because it's so disturbing, but the author did such a good job and portraying the pain for both Hi and Thena, of what happens when parents and children are separated and sold. Similar to what happened at the border under Trump, I think.



# Discussion Guide



## About the Book

Title: The Water Dancer

Author: Ta-Nehisi Coates

Published: One World, 2019

Website: <https://ta-nehisicoates.com/>

## Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. How is this book alike and different from other books you've read about slavery?
3. Telling the story through the eyes of Hiram provided a unique lens into the world of slavery and the Underground. What set Hiram apart from others and what in his character helped build this story?
4. The author wrote a pivotal article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, "The Case for Reparations," a well-researched chronology of how African-Americans have been stripped of freedom and wealth throughout American history. What parallels do you see between this book and the article?
5. How did the author portray the plantation owners in this work? Did it change your thinking about them in any way? Explain.
6. What happened when Hiram and Sophia tried to run? How were their paths different and why?
7. How does the author portray the Underground Railroad in the South vs. the North? How is the work different depending on location?
8. What was the mystical element in this book of "conduction"? What did you make of it in the context of the novel? In the context of the underground?
9. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. With whom do you most agree and why?
10. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?