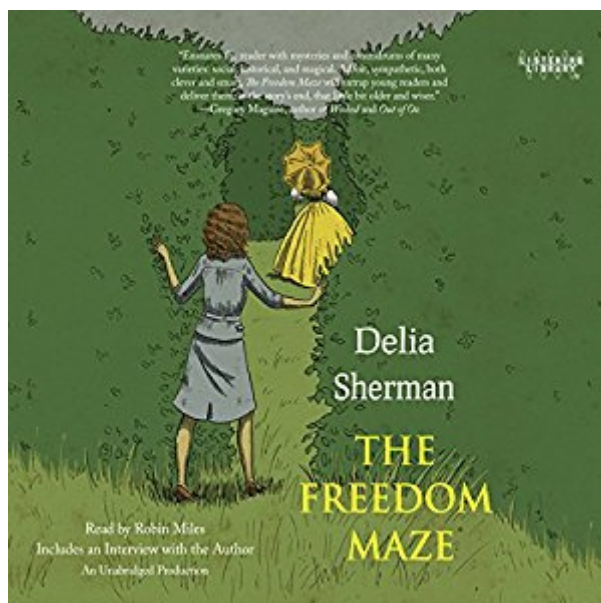


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# The Freedom Maze



## Synopsis

Audie Award Nominee, Children's Titles for Ages 8-12, 2013 Set against the burgeoning Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, and then just before the outbreak of the Civil War, *The Freedom Maze* explores both political and personal liberation, and how the two intertwine. In 1960, 13-year-old Sophie isn't happy about spending the summer at her grandmother's old house in the Bayou. But the house has a maze Sophie can't resist exploring once she finds it has a secretive and mischievous inhabitant. When Sophie, bored and lonely, makes an impulsive wish, she slips back 100 years into the past, to the year 1860. She hopes for a fantasy book adventure with herself as the heroine. Instead, she gets a real adventure in the race-haunted world of her family's Louisiana sugar plantation in 1860, where she is mistaken for a slave. President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is still two years in the future. The Thirteenth Amendment - abolishing and prohibiting slavery - will not be passed until April 1864. Muddy and bedraggled, Sophie obviously isn't a young lady of good breeding. She must therefore be a slave. And she is.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours 34 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Listening Library

Audible.com Release Date: September 25, 2012

Language: English

ASIN: B009GBYC76

Best Sellers Rank: #67 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > Civil War Period #313 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > 19th Century #486 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Prejudice & Racism

## Customer Reviews

This novel is the (co) winner of the Best Libertarian Science Fiction Novel of 2011. It really isn't science fiction, but it is a good examination of racism in the 1960s as compared to the 1860s. The time travel is really just a wink and a nod, but that's all that's needed for this book. I've had problems trying to teach my teenage children how bad things were when I was growing up. (They can't conceive of the fact that President Obama's parents were not legally married according to several states.) This book brings those attitudes front and center, in a book that is also entertaining. I think the

book is better marketed towards young adults, but (as with many YA books) it is still entertaining towards us old fogies.

Great historical details on a southern sugar plantation in 1860.

THE FREEDOM MAZE is an odd and intriguing book, blending two historical periods with mystical elements. At its core, though, this is a traditional coming-of-age story--which actually makes it hard for me to decide how I feel about this book. In the sweltering summer of 1960, 13-year-old Sophie's newly divorced mother sends her to her family's old plantation to live. Sophie, awkward in her body and struggling to be the graceful lady her family demands her be while she'd rather bury her nose in books, thinks it will be a miserable summer...until she meets a strange creature who ends up sending her back in time to 1860! Sophie's Fairchild ancestors mistake her as a slave, and at first the work demands are unfamiliar and difficult. But gradually, Sophie learns to manage herself, and better understands her white ancestors as well as her fellow slaves. Still, there's the problem of returning to 1960...In middle school, I read a book called *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen, which tells the story of a modern girl who gets thrown back in time to WWII Europe. THE FREEDOM MAZE follows the same story path. It is clear that Sherman has meticulously done her research on both time periods: the dialogue feels authentic, social beliefs ingrained, and details regarding setting extraordinary. It's hard enough accurately depicting one historical period; Delia Sherman has to make everyone look like underachievers by doing so for two! All of that is the backdrop, however, for the classic bildungsroman structure of this story. THE FREEDOM MAZE involves slavery and racism and Southern culture, but it's not interested in that so much as it is in Sophie's development from a petulant child to a more independent teenager. And that's where my potential love for this book trips up. Sophie is sympathetic at the beginning of the novel, when she is ordered this way and that by her "Southern belle" mother and grandmother, but when half the book passes and Sophie is still petulant and incompetent, my sympathy for her waned a bit. Of course, it wouldn't be a bildungsroman if Sophie didn't eventually learn, but it was a bit of a struggle for me in the middle to continue to be invested in the well-being of a timid and fretful girl. Think Mary from *The Secret Garden*, thrust into the pre-Civil War American South. THE FREEDOM MAZE is not a book for those who like their plots and pacing action-packed and always-running. I put the book down several times out of repetitiveness and Sophie's stagnancy before I began to be invested. And while I'm glad to have finished it, half of a book with a slow plot and fretful main character is still too much for me to like it fully. THE FREEDOM MAZE will be best for patient readers who like their readings

challenging, well-researched, and with just a dash of the fantastical.

Really enjoyed the pace, the details, the magic, the beautifully articulated atmosphere. Not exactly sure what the take-away is, but a lovely & thought provoking story.

The Freedom Maze  
Deliah Sherman 2011  
The Freedom Maze is the story of 13-year-old Sophie who in the summer of 1960 is dumped off at her maternal grandmothers house. She feels unwanted alone and bored but soon she finds a maze that transports her a hundred years in the past, she becomes a slave child instead of the Caucasian child she was before. Sophie spends six months in 1860 though it turns out to only be an hour in 1960 that she goes missing. She learns that her thoughts on Slavery and the idea that "Slaves" somehow had it easy, and were less than human beings was wrong. She comes back with a deeper understanding and appreciation for what slavery was, and what slaves went through. The Freedom Maze is a historical fantasy, and is very well written. Young adults who like historical novels or fantasies would really enjoy The Freedom Maze. I would highly recommend this book I could not put it down.

I received this e-book via LibraryThing Early Reviewers program which provides free books in exchange for a review. Ostensibly a Young Adult book, this novel kept me turning pages right until the end. The author does a superb job integrating the various threads of historical fiction and fantasy within a coming of age tale. The teenaged protagonist, Sophie, was written authentically as naïve, stubborn, and rebellious. The mother/daughter and other family relationships are well defined. Sophie's character matures substantially after her time travel adventures (or, more accurately, her misadventures). The primary and supporting characters are well-drawn and while some border on being stereotypes, the majority are, for the most part, believable. Initially, the fantasy aspect of the book seemed jarring to me, but then, there would have to be a way to explain Sophie's ability to time travel to her ancestral plantation home and back again. As the story unfolded, my concerns disappeared as Ms. Sherman does an excellent job encapsulating the fantastical elements within the African healing myths and rituals. At the back of the book, the author states the novel was written over an 18-year period. I applaud her persistence as it has paid off in a provocative novel that somehow manages to pull the reader in as the story progresses. The exhaustive research shines through and the writing never gets in the way of the storyline. Any book about slavery is necessarily tragic, but Ms. Sherman is able to write an interesting tale without making it too dark for younger readers. I recommend Freedom Maze for readers of any age.

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