

## **Bayou Magic**

It's Maddy's turn to have a bayou summer. At first she misses life back home in the city, but soon she grows to love everything about her new surroundings—the glimmering fireflies, the glorious landscape, and something else, deep within the water, that only Maddy sees. Could it be a mermaid? As her grandmother shares wisdom about sayings and signs, Maddy realizes she may be only the sibling to carry on her family's magical legacy. And when a disastrous oil leak threatens the bayou, she knows she may also be the only one who can help. Does she have what it takes to be a hero?

A coming-of-age tale rich with folk magic, set in the wake of the Gulf oil spill, *Bayou Magic* celebrates hope, friendship, and family, and captures the wonder of life in the Deep South.

### **Booklist – Starred Review**

Bayou Magic.

Rhodes, Jewell Parker (author).

May 2015. 256p. Little, Brown, hardcover, \$17 (9780316224840). Grades 4-7.

REVIEW.

First published March 15, 2015 (Booklist).

It's 10-year-old Maddy's turn to spend a summer with her maternal grandmother on the bayou in Bon Temps, Louisiana. She has heard stories from her sisters about the strange woman they call "Grandmère," but Maddy can't wait to go. During her stay, she meets the locals and makes friends with Bear, whose father works on a deepwater oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico and who is looked after by the bayou people. Under Grandmère's tutelage, Maddy learns her family's history, important life lessons taught through wise, simple dictums, and becomes adept at watching and listening. She comes to understand that family magic is deep within her, and when she senses that something bad is about to happen, she realizes that the only one able to keep her beloved bayou from being destroyed is her. Environmental issues that have impacted and continue to threaten the Gulf Coast play a strong role, shaping Maddy's understanding of humanity's connection to the fragile ecosystem. Though her stirring coming-of-age story is set in a world of magic, folk history, and ritual that is easy to embrace, at the same time it revels in friendship and love, and reflects life in the Deep South. Looking to add diversity to your shelves? Look no further than the fascinating characters that populate Bon Temps and experience the community in which they live. — *Jeanne Fredriksen*

<http://booklistonline.com/ProductInfo.aspx?pid=7232177&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

### **School Library Journal – Starred Review**

RHODES, Jewell Parker. Bayou Magic. 256p. ebook available. Little, Brown. May 2015. Tr \$17. ISBN 9780316224840.

Gr 3-6 –Maddy lives with her family in New Orleans. At almost 10, she is the youngest of five girls, and this summer it will be her turn to stay with her grandmother in the bayou. Apprehensive about the visit—her sisters say Grandmère is a witch, whose house has no electricity or indoor plumbing—Maddy is also excited to discover Bon Temps. Soon, Grandmère teaches Maddy about healing herbs and their family history. When Maddy finds that she can call fireflies and see mermaids, Grandmère tells her the story of Mami Wata, the water spirit who accompanied their slave ancestors from Africa. Maddy soon comes to love the wetlands and the residents of Bon Temps, human and otherwise. So when the Gulf oil spill threatens the town, it is Maddy who must use her magic to save her new home. Some sensitive subject matter may be disturbing to younger readers—Maddy's friend has an alcoholic father who inadvertently hurts him and then later dies in the explosion. Maddy is a brave and hopeful heroine, and the descriptions of the bayou are almost as magical as her legacy. VERDICT Hand this to middle grade readers who enjoy family stories, history, and a dose of fanciful magic.—*Laurie Slagenwhite Walters, Brighton District Library, Brighton, MI*

<http://www.slj.com/2015/02/reviews/books/from-bengal-to-the-bayou-fiction-grades-5-8/>

## **Publishers Weekly**

Bayou Magic

Jewell Parker Rhodes. Little, Brown, \$17 (256p) ISBN 978-0-316-22484-0

One summer, nearly-10-year-old Maddy Johnson gets swept up in the mysteries of the Louisiana bayou. She's the youngest of her five sisters and the last to spend a summer with her Grandmère Lavalier, hours from her family's home in New Orleans. Quickly adapting to life in her grandmother's wooden shack, Maddy learns about signs and healing herbs, listens to tales about her ancestors, explores the waters with a boy named Bear, meets other locals (who, like Maddy, are a "stew" of ethnic backgrounds), and thinks she sees a mermaid, the legendary Mami Wata. Grandmère's quiet sadness about the past and worry for the future ("To be a hero, bad things have to happen," she tells Maddy) strike notes of unsettling and suspenseful tension. Readers will be easily drawn into Rhodes's (Sugar) heady descriptions, and as environmental disaster threatens the landscape Maddy has come to love, her heroism shines as she protects the community and recognizes her own strength. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Michael Bourret, Dystel & Goderich Literary Management. (May)*

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-316-22484-0>

## **Views from the Tesseract**

Ten-year-old Maddy knows how to make a good jambalaya. She knows how to cook with her heart, adding just the right amount of spices, rice, meat and vegetables. Like Maddy, I suspect Jewell Parker Rhodes has been "cooking" with her heart in creating this story of family, magic and the world of the bayou.

Maddy is the youngest of four sisters and this summer it is her turn to go and spend time with Grandmère in the bayou. She's nervous about going, but excited too. But she's her Grandmère's child, and magic runs in Maddy's veins that connects her to the bayou. It's a wondrous time, full of discovery, friendships, good food and stories, but there's trouble coming. Grandmère knows it, and Maddy can sense it—and she'll have to be strong to help save the bayou from what's to come.

Jewell Parker Rhodes has written a richly evocative middle grade fantasy adventure. With Maddy, readers will recognize a strong young heroine who is just beginning to step into her power while getting to know her Grandmère. She's still a child, and her apprehension of the future is very real, but so is her passion and empathy for others. Maddy isn't merely learning to take the path her grandmère has taken, but to forge her own way, with her own set of abilities. And sometimes what she chooses to do goes against the conventional wisdom of the adults around her. Maddy has her own gifts and strengths, and, in the end, they'll have to be enough.

The author brings the flavors, sights and scents of the bayou into the reader's imagination, making it not so much an exotic land of gators and witchcraft as a green and growing land of rich diversity. Environmental themes fall naturally into play with older myths of water spirits and mermaids. I was delighted with the fact that the author has given the mermaid legend new life here in the bayou, as an African water spirit that traveled with the slave ships to this new land. Mermaids are not usually a favorite myth of mine, but Jewell Parker Rhodes has convinced me that maybe I simply haven't been reading the right kind of mermaid stories.

This is a story, not so much of small magics, but of regional ones—less concerned with the workings of good and evil and more invested in the land and the people that inhabit it. There's a fierce love here, and a wonderful sense of family and familial roots. What child hasn't sought to find who they take after in the family? Where they belong? Young readers just beginning to get into richer fare are the perfect audience for this contemporary fantasy. Maddy is a younger heroine that they'll quickly identify with and root for. I've already passed this onto a few of my young and hungry readers who devoured it—and loved every minute!

Maddy's amazing summer is full of joy and sadness, but it is so rich and lovely that when she leaves, I can't help but hope for a story of her next summer visit.

*Note: An advanced reader copy was provided by the publisher.*

*Publisher: Little Brown Books for Young Readers*

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*ISBN13: 9780316224840*

*Recommended for grades 3 and up.*

<https://shanshad1.wordpress.com/2015/03/29/reviews-bayou-magic/>

Jewell Parker Rhodes is the author of the Louisiana Girls children's book trilogy, which includes *Ninth Ward*, *Sugar*, and *Bayou Magic*. Her children's books have received the Parents' Choice Foundation Award, the Coretta Scott King Author Honor Award, and the Jane Addam's Children's Book Award, among others. *Towers Falling*, her new middle grade novel, was published in July 2016.

Jewell is also the author of six adult novels: *Voodoo Dreams*, *Magic City*, *Douglass' Women*, *Season*, *Moon*, and *Hurricane*, as well as the memoir *Porch Stories: A Grandmother's Guide to Happiness*, and two writing guides, *Free Within Ourselves: Fiction Lessons for Black Authors* and *The African American Guide to Writing and Publishing Non-Fiction*.

Her work has been published in China, Korea, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, and has appeared on NPR's "Selected Shorts." Her adult literary awards include: the American Book Award, the National Endowment of the Arts Award in Fiction, the Black Caucus of the American Library Award for Literary Excellence, the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award for Outstanding Writing, two Arizona Book Awards, and a finalist citation for the Hurston-Wright Legacy Award.

Jewell grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Drama Criticism, a Master of Arts in English, and a Doctor of Arts in English (Creative Writing) from Carnegie Mellon University. She is also a professor of Creative Writing and American Literature and the former Director of the Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing.



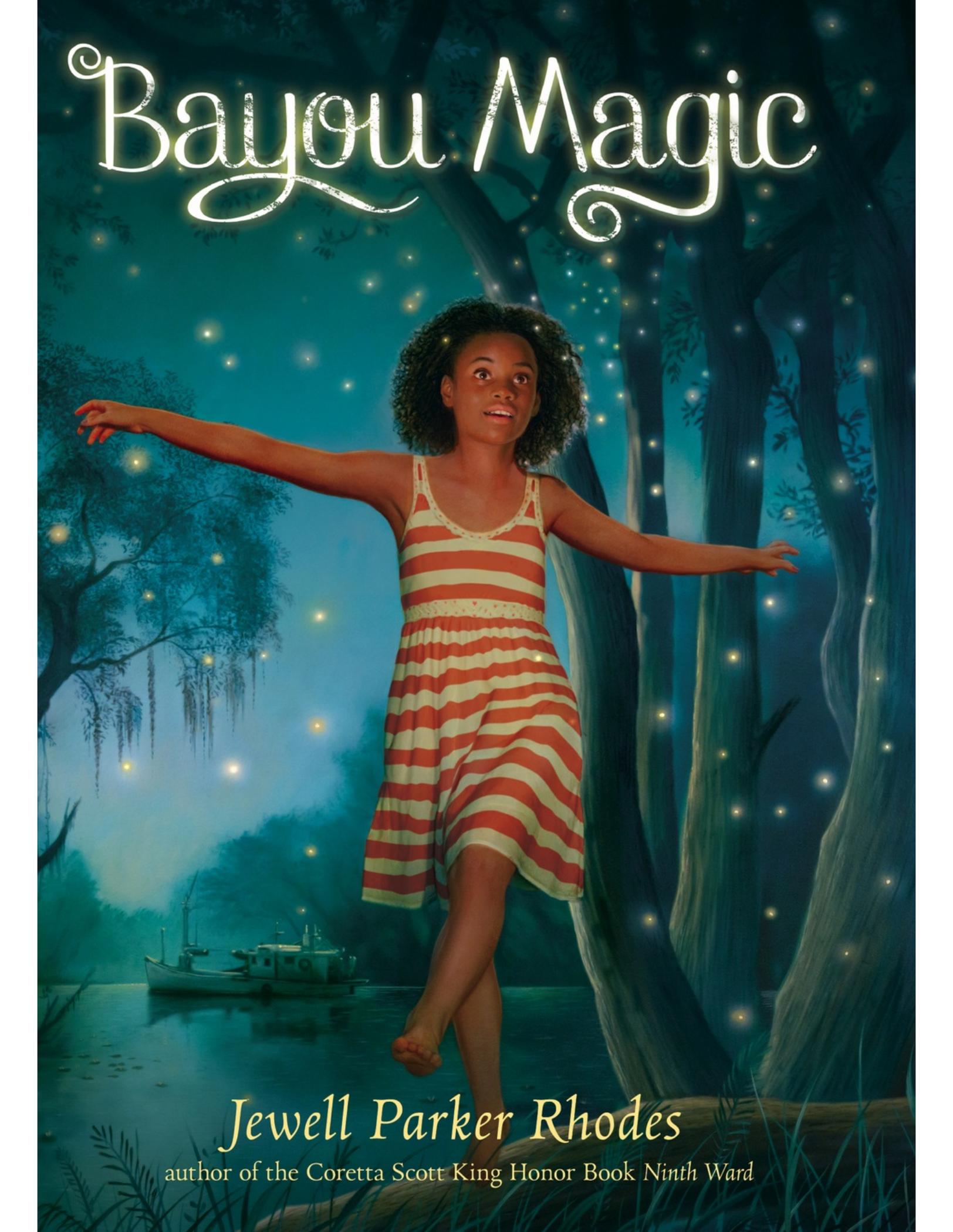
# Bayou Magic

*What secrets  
hide in the water?*

*Jewell Parker Rhodes*

*author of the Coretta Scott King Honor Book *Ninth Ward**

# Bayou Magic

A young girl with curly hair, wearing a red and white striped dress, stands in a bayou at night. She has her arms outstretched and a look of wonder on her face. The scene is filled with glowing fireflies and large, dark trees. In the background, a boat is visible on the water. The overall atmosphere is magical and serene.

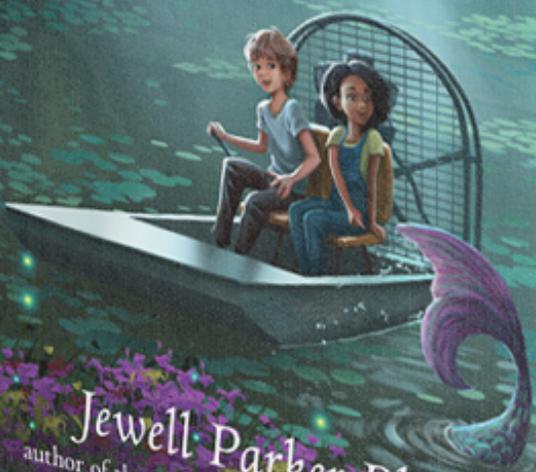
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