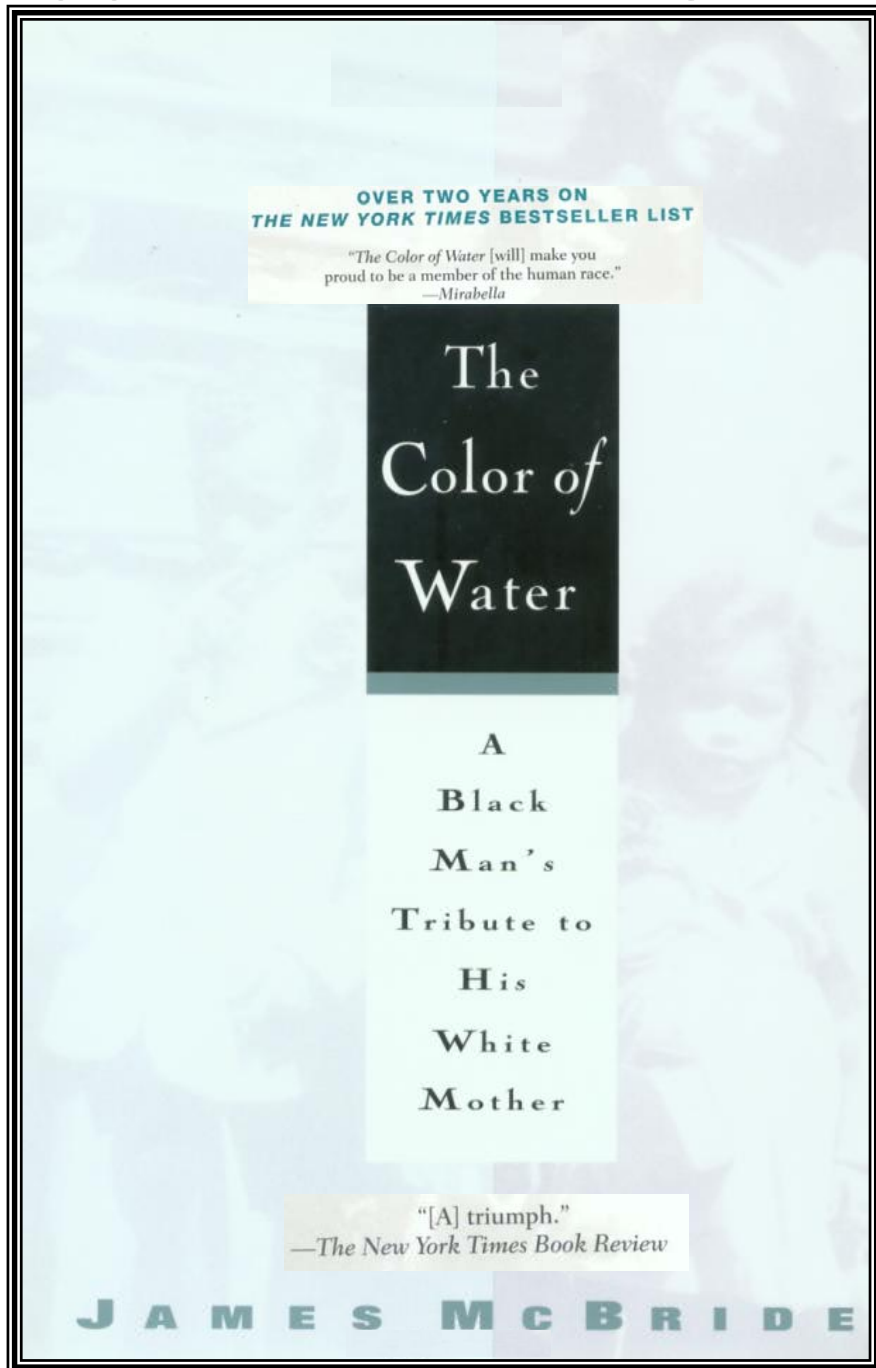


# Long Island Reads 2007 Reader's Guide



Long Island Reads is sponsored by  
Nassau Library System &  
Suffolk Cooperative Library System





Meet the Author  
**Meet the Author**

**James McBride**

***The Color of Water***

**An Afternoon with James McBride**

**Saturday, April 21, 2007**

**Farmingdale Public Library / all are welcome**

**Reception at 2pm / Program at 3pm**

**Free tickets available beginning Wednesday, March 28, 2007**

**Limit of two tickets per person**

**For tickets call: Nassau (516) 292-8920 x236**

**Suffolk (631) 286-1600 x1335**

**Copies of *The Color of Water* will be available for purchase and signing**

**PLEASE NOTE: Mr. McBride will only sign books before the program – so please arrive early if you plan to have a book signed.**

**Presented by the Long Island Reads 2007 Committee**

**Sponsored by Nassau Library System and Suffolk Cooperative Library System, with support from the Suffolk County Library Association, the Friends of the Farmingdale Public Library, and Astoria Federal Savings.**

# JAMES McBRIDE

on

## Writing Fiction

Writing fiction is like playing jazz. There are no foreseen rules, no maps, no music to read; the audience doesn't understand harmony, theory, chord changes. They only know what works for them because the ear doesn't lie. But underneath the freedom of jazz are dozens and dozens of rules, even prescribed social behaviors. Fiction is the same. It allows you to extrapolate from the facts, the melody, to create what is real and what is not, but as a writer you are not free. In fact, fiction is less "free" than nonfiction, because nonfiction is rooted in facts you have chosen to write about. Fiction is the more restrictive. You are a spectator to history, in a sense. You are the soloist and the characters are the bandleaders, the Duke Ellington and Count Basie. They present the song, and you must play it as they determine. You can solo within the song and do what you may, but ultimately they, not you, determine what the song is and how it should be played.\*

\*From [www.jamesmcbride.com](http://www.jamesmcbride.com)

# About Long Island Reads

## One Island, One Book

**One Book** projects are community-wide reading programs. The first **One Book** project was initiated by the Washington Center for the Book in 1998. Since then, the concept has spread across the United States and around the world. Seattle librarian, Nancy Pearl, author of *Book Lust* and *More Book Lust*, and NPR book critic, is the mastermind behind the **One City, One Book** phenomenon. If your city is interested in starting its own program, you can obtain "How To" information by going to Seattle Reads ([www.spl.org](http://www.spl.org)).

To see a listing of **One City, One Book** projects visit the Library of Congress website at [www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/one-book.html](http://www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/one-book.html). Projects are listed by state, city and author. While at the Library of Congress site, check out their Center for the Book.

Other sites of interest include:

All America Reads [www.allamericareads.org](http://www.allamericareads.org)

The Big Read-National Endowment for the Arts [www.artsmidwest.org](http://www.artsmidwest.org)

The **Long Island Reads** Committee is a group of librarians and library employees from Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, New York who volunteer to work on this Island-wide reading initiative. Each spring people in Nassau and Suffolk read the same book, participate in discussions of the selection, and enjoy related events in public libraries.

The program takes place in April; many events take place during  
**National Library Week, April 15-21, 2007.**

**For more information about Long Island Reads  
One Island, One Book visit:**

**[www.longislandreads.org](http://www.longislandreads.org)**

## Biography of James McBride

Born in 1957, James McBride grew up one of twelve siblings in the all-black housing projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn, the son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white. After getting his Masters in Journalism from Columbia University at the age of 22, McBride began a career in which he worked as a staff writer for the *Washington Post*, *People Magazine*, and the *Boston Globe*. But McBride, who studied composition at The Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, also loved writing and performing music, and at age 30, he quit his job as a feature writer at *The Washington Post* to pursue a music career in New York. After Anita Baker recorded a song he'd written, "Good Enough," McBride had enough contacts in the industry to spend the next eight years as a professional musician, writing, recording, and performing. He has since become an award-winning composer, and in 2004, he was nominated by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the National Council on the Arts.

McBride was playing tenor sax for jazz singer Little Jimmy Scott while he wrote *The Color of Water*. The book's alternating voices, McBride and his mother, have been compared to the jazz music he plays. *The Color of Water* was a worldwide success, selling millions of copies and drawing high praise from book critics. "This moving and unforgettable memoir needs to be read by people of all colors and faiths," wrote *Publishers Weekly*. It now appears on reading lists at high schools and colleges around the country, and has been chosen as the "One Book" selection by at least fourteen cities.

Since the enormous success of *The Color of Water*, McBride has turned to fiction, and although his second book draws part of its inspiration from family history, it isn't autobiographical. "My initial aim was to write a novel about a group of black soldiers who liberate a concentration camp in Eastern Europe," McBride explains on his web site. "I read lots of books and spent a lot of time researching the subject but soon came to the realization that I'm not qualified to write about the holocaust. It's too much." Instead, he recalled the war stories of his uncle and cousin, who served in the all-black 92nd Infantry Division, and began researching World War II in Italy -- particularly the clashes between Italian Partisans and the German army. The resulting novel, *Miracle at St. Anna*, is "an intricate mosaic of narratives that ultimately becomes about betrayal and the complex moral landscape of war" (*The New York Times Book Review*) and has earned high marks from critics for its nuanced portrayal of four Buffalo Soldiers and the Italian villagers they encounter.\*

\*Information gathered from [www.jamesmcbride.com](http://www.jamesmcbride.com), New York State Writer's Institute at the State University of New York website, and the National Endowment for the Arts, National Initiatives, Operation Homecoming website.

## Plot Summary

Chapter summaries were adapted from the *One Book, One Philadelphia* project

### Notes on *The Color of Water*

Note: The chapters alternate between James's story and the early history of his mother, Ruth McBride.

#### **Chapter 1 – *Dead (Ruth's early history)***

James McBride's mother, Ruth, describes her early life. Born on April 1, 1921, to Polish Orthodox Jewish parents, Fishel Shilsky (Tateh) and Hudis Shilsky (Mameh), she was named Ruchel Dwarja Alyska. Her parents changed her name to Rachel when they immigrated to America. Her father, a hard, unyielding man, worked as an itinerant rabbi and moved the family several times. Her mother, gentle and meek, suffered from polio. When Rachel was nineteen, as a way to mark her past as history, she changed her name to Ruth. Ruth became dead to her family as a result of her marriage to James's African American father, Andrew Dennis McBride. Ruth's family recited kaddish and sat shiva. It is explained that in the Jewish faith, this ritual acknowledges the death of a family member or friend.

#### **Chapter 2 – *The Bicycle***

James's stepfather, Hunter Jordan, dies. The death of the only father James has known has a severe effect on him. James drops out of school and becomes involved in drugs and theft. His mother is distraught and spends hours riding a bicycle around the neighborhood. To James, who has just realized that his mother is white, her bicycle mania is embarrassing and an example of her differentness.

#### **Chapter 3 – *Kosher (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth describes her parents' arranged marriage and how they got to America. At the time the family arrived, Ruth was two; her brother, Sam, was four. The family stayed with her grandparents, Bube and Zaydeh. She details the strict rules of Orthodox Judaism and how they affected her. Her grandfather died while she was still very young. His death, and the way it was handled, provoked a life-long fear of death in her.

#### **Chapter 4 – *Black Power***

James becomes more aware of the divide between blacks and whites. Although his mother is white, she lives in a black world and refuses to acknowledge her whiteness. The Black Power movement is ascendant, and the Black Panthers are attracting more and more followers. Black pride is manifesting itself. In this environment, James is terrified for his mother's safety, yet she concentrates on raising her children to succeed. Reference is made to the fact that she and her husband, Andrew McBride, started the New Brown Memorial Baptist Church.

**Chapter 5 – *Old Testament (Ruth's early history)*** Ruth describes life with a traveling rabbi father. They lived in many places, for he was not considered good enough to be asked to stay on in a permanent position. Being poor and Jewish and having a handicapped mother embarrassed Ruth. The family moved south, to Suffolk, Virginia, where her father opened a grocery store in "the colored side of town." She tells of her loathing of her father, who was harsh and unloving and sexually abused her.

**Chapter 6 – *The New Testament*** James describes his mother's love of God and paints a colorful description of family Sundays in church. Later, in the New Brown Church, the family plays and recites Bible stories on Easter. Here, as elsewhere, the emphasis on schooling and religion is paramount. The title, *The Color of Water*, comes from this chapter.

**Chapter 7 – *Sam (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth describes the South of the 30s, with the specter of the Depression and the ominous presence of the Ku Klux Klan. She illustrates how the black population navigated that era. Her brother, Sam, could tolerate neither the life he was leading nor the tyranny of his father, and he ran off. He joined the Army and was eventually killed in World War II.

**Chapter 8 – *Brothers and Sisters***

James lives in a home of "orchestrated chaos." The family's life is described including James's position as one of the five "young-uns" in a family of twelve children, his mother's inability to cook, the importance of food, the sharing of clothes and musical instruments and the hatching of childhood plots. He sees his house as a combination three-ring circus and zoo. He describes some of his siblings – his sister Helen, the rebel; Rosetta, the resident queen of the house; his brother Dennis, the civil rights activist and artist with aspirations of becoming a doctor.

**Chapter 9 – *Shul (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth's father performed circumcisions as handily as he slaughtered beef. Her mother sent the children to school, but her father objected to the influence of a gentile education and paid for the girls to receive private lessons in sewing and record keeping. The whites at Ruth's school hated Jews. Jews were seen as different from everyone, and few liked them. Since her father dealt with black customers, she and her family were considered lower class. Her one salvation at this time was her friendship with Frances.

**Chapter 10 – *School***

James is surprised to hear his mother speak Yiddish when she takes the children to Jewish stores for school clothes. Ruth's Jewish values begin to emerge. His sister Rosetta's education is paid for by a Jewish foundation. Ruth sends the children miles away to predominately Jewish schools, where they are seen as token blacks. During this time James discovers music and books. The 60s sweep through the house, and the older siblings react to the changing times. In public, James becomes ashamed of his white mother.

**Chapter 11 – *Boys (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth details the travails of working in her father's store, her feeling of being an outsider as a Jew, and the pain of attending a school where she is ostracized. She continues to like black people because they do not judge her. Her first boyfriend, Peter, is black. A black/white relationship is very dangerous in the South at this time. Fifteen-year-old Ruth becomes pregnant.

**Chapter 12 – *Daddy***

James's mother and his stepfather, Hunter Jordan, meet and marry. His younger brother, Hunter, is born. The family moves to a larger house in St. Albans, Queens. His stepfather visits on weekends while maintaining his apartment in Brooklyn. Although Hunter Jordan is a good man and loved by Ruth and her children, he cannot live in the chaos of the Queens house. Hunter Jordan has a stroke. James knows that his stepfather is going to die.

**Chapter 13 – *New York (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth's mother knew that Ruth was pregnant. She sent Ruth to her relatives in New York. A colorful description of this extended family is provided. Aunt Betts helped Ruth obtain an abortion.

#### **Chapter 14 – *Chicken Man***

James watches his mother succumb to grief over her second husband's death. She rides her bike for hours, starts piano lessons, and lets the house fall into disrepair. James stays out of the house as much as possible to avoid the impact of watching his mother suffer. James's life unravels as well. He is sent to stay with his half-sister Jack in Louisville, Kentucky. He hangs out with his brother-in-law and his "boys" and gets a "street corner" education. James secures a job pumping gas, but loses it when he gets into a fistfight. He meets Chicken Man, an alcoholic who waxes philosophical when sober.

#### **Chapter 15 – *Graduation (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth remained in New York after her abortion, but went back to Suffolk to finish high school. She discovered that Peter had married after getting another girl pregnant. She began to have opinions of her own and determined to leave Suffolk. She worried about leaving her mother behind, for she had always been her mother's "eyes and ears." She went to graduation only at the behest of her best friend, Frances, but at the last moment realized that she could not step into the Protestant Church where the ceremony was being held. The next day she caught a Greyhound bus to New York City.

#### **Chapter 16 – *Driving***

James's mother has always taken the subway. As far as he knows, she has never learned to drive. She asks James to teach her to drive. After one lesson she refuses ever to drive again. His mother is falling apart, grieving not only over the loss of her husband, but also over her secret past – the loss of her Jewish family and her guilt over leaving her mother. Jesus is her salvation. When James returns for his junior year of high school, he resolves to mend his ways.

#### **Chapter 17 – *Lost in Harlem (Ruth's early history)***

When Ruth returned to New York, she worked in Aunt Mary's leather factory and lived with her Bube. Aunt Mary hired a new man, Andrew "Dennis" McBride, a top-notch leather-maker and an artisan. Ruth discovered the magic of Harlem. As a result of Aunt Mary's meanness, she quit her job and was hired as a manicurist in a barbershop run by Rocky, a pimp. Because she was worried about her mother, she asked Dennis to find out about her Mameh and her sister, Dee Dee. In telling Dennis about Rocky, Ruth felt ashamed. She left Harlem.

#### **Chapter 18 – *Lost in Delaware***

James's mother announces they are moving to Delaware. After much vacillation she buys a house in Wilmington. She has five kids at home now and seven in college. They find that life in Wilmington is racially charged and very different from New York City. Ruth wants to go back, but knows she cannot. She feels she has made a terrible mistake. Prayer turns her around. James focuses on his music and is selected to travel to Europe with the American Youth Jazz Band. He meets his benefactor, Mrs. Dawson. He is accepted into the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio.

#### **Chapter 19 – *The Promise (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth was through with the fast life. She got a job as a waitress and dated Dennis. Dennis was a talented violinist, but black musicians were not allowed in orchestras. He got a job in a factory. He and Ruth began living together – a situation considered scandalous. Dennis's family and friends accepted her. When she called home, her father told her that her mother was sick and he needed help with the store. She returned to Suffolk and found her father having an affair and wanting a divorce. Dee Dee begged her to remain in Suffolk, and against her better judgment, Ruth promised that she would. It was a promise she would find she could not keep.

### **Chapter 20 – *Old Man Shilsky***

In 1984, James is working on the staff of the Boston Globe, unable to decide whether he wants to be a musician or a writer. He is also caught between the two worlds of black and white. Because he needs to run from his confusion and pain, he goes to Suffolk to seek his mother's old friend, Frances. Instead, he meets Eddie Thompson, who knew his mother as Rachel. Eddie tells him about "Old Man Shilsky" – a detestable and mean-spirited man, who disliked and cheated blacks.

### **Chapter 21 – *A Bird Who Flies (Ruth's early history)***

In 1941, Ruth's Bube died. Ruth decided to return to New York. Her father tried to get her to stay; she refused. He told her that if she married a black man, she could never come home again. She boarded the bus and discovered that her mother's Polish passport had been placed in her lunchbox. She resumed her relationship with Dennis and got a job in a glass factory. Her mother became gravely ill, but Ruth was not allowed to see her. When Mameh died, Ruth was guilt ridden. Dennis provided strength and support. She began going to Metropolitan Church in Harlem with him. She started the conversion to Christianity.

### **Chapter 22 – *A Jew Discovered***

In 1992, while standing in front of a synagogue in Suffolk, James acknowledges his own connection to the synagogue and to Judaism. His search for the Shilsky family ends. He now understands the isolation his mother and her family suffered. He leaves for New York City.

### **Chapter 23 – *Dennis (Ruth's early history)***

Ruth stayed on the black side after her mother died. Dennis was afraid to marry her because of the condemnation that would ensue. They continued living together and going to the Metropolitan Baptist Church, where she admired Rev. Abner Brown. She describes these years as her "glory years." In 1942, she joined the Metropolitan Church and became the church secretary. She and Dennis married and had their first child in 1943. They lived in a one-room apartment for nine years, which she describes as the happiest years of her life. In the early 1950s, they moved to the Red Hook Housing Project in Brooklyn. When Reverend Brown died, she and Dennis started their own church, and Dennis got a divinity degree. When she was pregnant with her eighth child, James, Dennis died of lung cancer. None of Ruth's own Jewish family would help her. She met and married James's stepfather, Hunter Jordan.

### **Chapter 24 – *New Brown***

James realizes that Andrew McBride left behind the groundwork for Ruth to raise twelve kids. In 1994, the family attends the 40th anniversary of the New Brown Church. Ruth, now 74, addresses the assembly speaking stiffly at first, and then with certainty and joy.

### **Chapter 25 – *Finding Ruthie (Ruth's early history)***

In 1993, Ruth is doing well but is preoccupied with thoughts of her own mortality. It has taken years for James to find out who his mother is. The journey of discovery leads him to embrace his mixed race. He knows now that he can be both a musician and a writer.

## Critics and *The Color of Water*

*The Color of Water* spent more than two years on The New York Times bestseller list, was published worldwide, and was the winner of the prestigious Anisfield-Wolf Book Award. It has been selected for 14 “One Book” community programs, according to the Library of Congress’s Center for the Book website.

### Reviews

- *Booklist* v. 92 (Jan. 1-15 1996.)
- *The Christian Science Monitor (Eastern edition)* (Feb. 14 1996.)
- *Christianity Today* v. 41 (Feb. 3 1997.)
- *Current (Washington, D.C.)* no. 438 (Dec. 2001.)
- *Library Journal* v. 121 (Jan. 1996.)
- *Michigan Quarterly Review* v. 41 no. 3 (Summ. 2002.)
- *Multi-Cultural Review* v. 5 (Dec. 1996.)
- *The Nation* v. 262 (Apr. 22 1996.)
- *The New York Times Book Review* v. 101 (Mar. 31 1996.)
- *The New York Times Educational Supplement* no. 4256 (Jan. 23 1998 supp Friday.)

## Suggestions for Reading Critically

*Adapted from the Library of Congress Center for the Book Guidelines*

The best stories are those that connect to human experience. They reveal an important truth, or provide a profound sense of kinship between reader and writer. Searching for, identifying, and discussing these truths deepens the reader's appreciation of the story. Asking questions, reading carefully, imagining yourself in the story, analyzing style and structure, and searching for personal meaning in a work of literature all enhance the work's value and the discussion potential for your group. Here are some helpful suggestions on how you can become a more critical reader.

- **Make notes and mark pages as you go.** Reading for a book discussion – whether you are the leader or simply a participant – differs somewhat from reading purely for pleasure. As you read a book in preparation for a discussion, ask questions of yourself and mark down pages you might want to refer back to. Make notes like, "Is this significant?" or "Why does the author include this?" Making notes as you go slows down your reading but saves you the time of searching out important passages later.
- **Ask tough questions of yourself and the book.** Obviously, asking questions of yourself as you read means you don't know the answer yet, and sometimes you never will discover the answers. Don't be afraid to ask hard questions because often the author is presenting difficult issues for that very purpose. Look for questions that may lead to in-depth conversations with your group and make the readings more meaningful.
- **Pay attention to the authors' messages.** As with any skill, critical reading improves with practice. Remember that a good author uses every word in a text deliberately. Try to be aware of what the authors are revealing about themselves and what they want you to learn about life from their perspectives.
- **Analyze themes.** Try to analyze the important themes of a story and to consider the premises the author started with. Imagine an author mulling over the beginnings of the story, asking, "what if" questions.
- **Get to know the characters.** When you meet the characters in the book, place yourself at the scene. Think of them as you do the people around you. Judge them. Think about their faults and their motives. What would it be like to interact with them? Are the tone and style of their dialogue authentic? Read portions aloud to get to know the voices of the characters.
- **Notice the structure of the stories as well as the organization of the entire book.** Sometimes the structure of the book illustrates an important concept or helps to create a mood. Notice how the editor structured the book. How do the stories relate to each other? How are the individual stories and selections structured?
- **Who are the narrators?** How does the sequence of events unfold to create the mood of the story? Is it written in flashbacks? Does the sequence of actions make sense to you?

- **Make comparisons to other stories and works.** Compare the book and the stories to others that have a similar theme or style. Often, themes run through an author's works that are more fully realized by comparison. Comparing one author's work to that of another can help you solidify your opinions, as well as illuminate qualities you may otherwise miss.
- **Think about what the author doesn't say as well as what they do say.** During a book discussion, what you're really talking about is everything that the author hasn't said – all those white spaces on the printed page. (Incidentally, this "everything that the author hasn't said" idea is why poetry makes such a rich topic for discussion.)

## **Suggested Book Discussion Questions for *The Color of Water***

*Adapted from One Book, One Philadelphia*

### **Examining the Title**

- Why does Ruth tell James, “God is the color of water?” (51)
- What is the effect on James of his accepting this?
- Why does he say that his brother, Richie, did not accept this? (51)
- Why is the phrase, the color of water, the title of this book?

### **Examining Race**

- Why does Ruth say, “She’s light-skinned.” (xvii)
- Why is this statement in the preface to the book?
- When does the color of her skin matter to Ruth?
- How important is it to James that his mother, Ruth, is white?
- Does James know why he hit the Black Panther’s kid on the bus? (36)
- Why was the “question of race...like the power of the moon?” (94)
- Why did James think it odd, “Race was something he [stepfather] never talked about?” (125)
- Why did racism smash James “across the face like a bottle...?” (205)

### **Examining Religion**

- Why does Ruth believe that marriage “is not about black and white. It’s about God.” 233
- Why does Ruth tell James that being Jewish is a “real workout, which is maybe why I’m not a Jew now?” (2)
- Why is Judaism dead for Ruth? (“truly gone from their world...” (284 – 285)
- Why is Christianity so important to her?
- Why does she believe it is the same God? Why is religion important to Ruth?
- Why must James accept Jackie’s advice to “Put yourself in God’s hands?” (161)
- Why does this book end with the quote from “Proverbs?” (291)

### **Examining Identity**

- Why does James have to find “Ruthie” before he can find himself?
- Why has he structured the book with alternative, parallel chapters? (see table of contents)
- Is James the “Jew Discovered?” (Chapter 22, p.219...)
- Why is James frustrated by “a world that considers the color of your face an immediate political statement?” (262)
- When did he learn to put together music and writing? Why did he see these interests as conflicting?
- Why is the list of Ruth’s children, their education and their present work, included? (275)
- Why is it important to tell us that James is the eighth of twelve children? (65)

### **Examining Family/Parenting Relationships**

- What are “mommy’s contradictions?” (29)
- Why does James call “mommy...a flying compilation of competing interests and conflicts?”(260)
- What did Ruth learn from her parents that made her a good mother?
- What did Ruth try to do differently from the way she was brought up?
- How were her values different? Were any of her values similar?

### **Examining Context**

- What effect did James’s successful quest to learn his mother’s history have on both himself and his mother?
- What role did New York City play in Ruth’s and James’s lives?

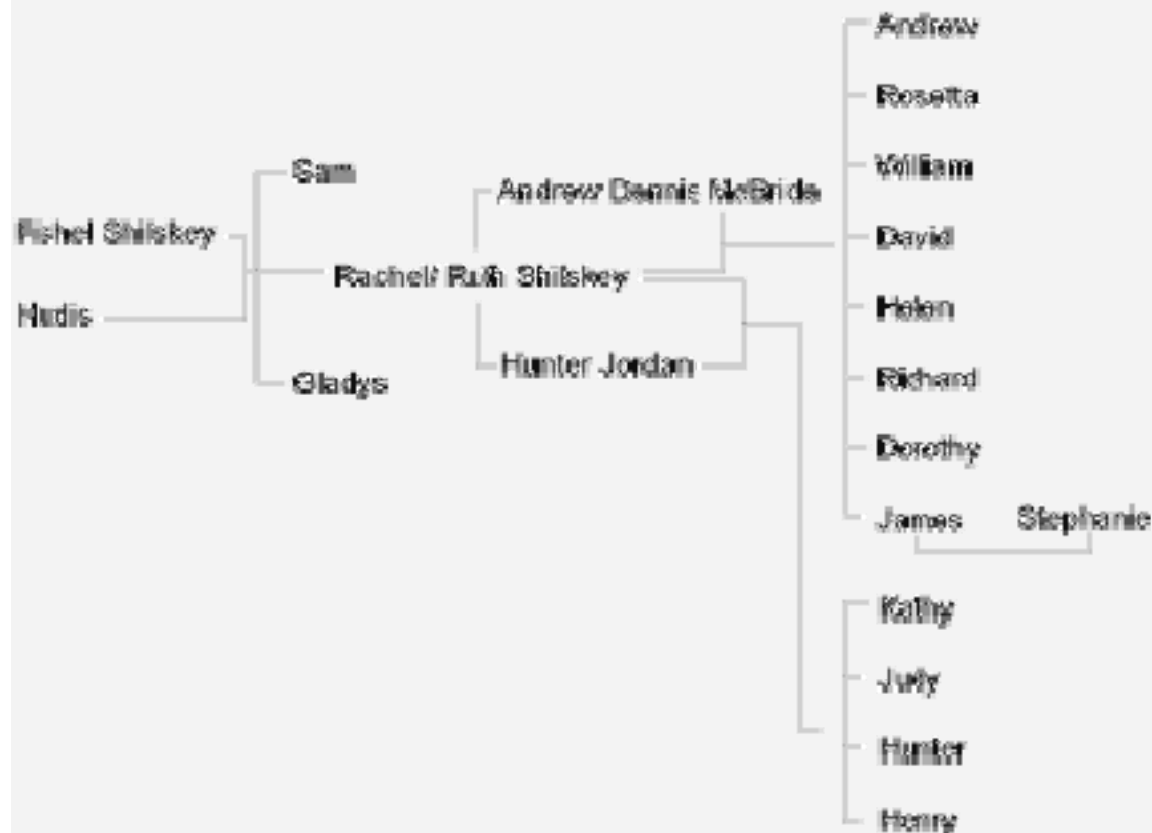
## Additional Book Discussion Questions for *The Color of Water*

From Lee Fertitta, Director of Adult Services and Book Discussion Leader, Port Washington Library

1. In a way, Ruth/Rachel is an immigrant three times – from Poland to America; from Judaism to Christianity and from white to black. How did these transitions shape her life and that of her children? Was it easier “in the old days” than it would be now?
2. Prejudice is an undercurrent for most of the book. What is it about prejudice that makes us behave in such ways?
3. New York’s Harlem community was more accepting of Ruth than her home town of Suffolk, Virginia. Do you think that living with discrimination makes it easier to accept “other?”
4. Intimate relations between African-Americans and whites have long been taboo, even though such relationships are no longer illegal. How does Ruth handle discrimination? What does she teach her children about it?

## Family Tree

Family Tree was prepared by the One Book, One Philadelphia project



## Genre Information

*The Color of Water* has been classified as **Biography, Race Identity**. Here are some titles to help you explore this genre.

Budick, E. Miller. *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Conway, Jill Ker. *When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Elie, Paul. *The Life You Save May be Your Own: an American Pilgrimage*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2003.

Greene, Bob. *To Our Children's Children: Preserving Family Histories for Generations to Come*. Doubleday, 1993.

Hamilton, Ian. *Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography*. Faber & Faber, 1992.

Harap, Louis. *Dramatic Encounters: the Jewish Presence in Twentieth-Century American Drama, Poetry, and Humor and the Black-Jewish Literary Relationship*. Greenwood Press, 1987.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Harvard University Press, 1992.

O'Hearn, Claudine C. *Half and Half: Writer's on Growing up Biracial and Bicultural*. Pantheon Books, 1998.

Simonson, Rick and Scott Walker, editors. *Multi-cultural Literacy*. Graywolf Press, 1988.

Singley, Bernestine. *When Race Becomes Real: Black and White Writers Confront Their Personal Histories*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2002.

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Belknap Press, 1993.

Tarver, Australia and Paula C. Barnes. *New Voices on the Harlem Renaissance: Essays on Race, Gender and Literary Discourse*. Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006.

## Further Reading

- Berman, Paul, editor. *Blacks and Jews: Alliances and Arguments*. Delacorte Press, 1994.
- Buenker, John D. and Lorman A. Ratner. *Multiculturalism in the United States: a Comparative Guide to Acculturation and Ethnicity*. Greenwood Press, 2005.
- Chireau, Yvonne and Nathaniel Deutsch, editors. *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Friedman, Murray. *What Went Wrong?: the Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance*. Free Press, 1995.
- Gates, Henry Louis. *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Gennari, John. *Blowing Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*. University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Gerard, Charles D. *Jazz in Black and White: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Jazz Community*. Praeger, 1998.
- Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn. *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century*. Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Kaaser, Gigi. *Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.
- Lewis, Elliott. *Fade: My Journeys in Multiracial America*. Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006.
- Mathabane, Mark. *Love in Black and White: the Triumph of Love Over Prejudice and Taboo*. Harpercollins, 1992.
- Melnick, Jeffrey Paul. *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews and American Popular Song*. Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Salzman, Jack, editor. *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews*. George Braziller, 1992.
- Salzman, Jack and Cornel West. *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

## If You Liked *The Color of Water* – Suggested Titles

- Andrews, Lori. *Black Power, White Blood: the Life and Times of Johnny Spain*. Pantheon Books, 1996.
- Baker, Kevin. *Striver's Row*. HarperCollins, 2006.
- Ball, Edward. *The Sweet Hell Inside*. William Morrow, 2001.
- Barnstone, Willis. *We Jews and Blacks: Memoir with Poems*. Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Cross, June. *Secret Daughter: a Mixed-Race Daughter and the Mother Who Gave Her Away*. Viking, 2006.
- Gunst, Laurie. *Off-white: a Memoir*. Soho Press, 2005.
- Ellison, Ralph. *The Invisible Man*. Random House, 1952.
- Haley, Alex. *Roots*. Doubleday, 1976.
- Horowitz, Irving Louis. *Daydreams and Nightmares: Reflections of a Harlem Childhood*. University of Mississippi Press, 1990.
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## **The Long Island Reads 2007 Committee**

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**Contact your public library for more information about  
Long Island Reads events during  
National Library Week, April 15-21, 2007.**



## Long Island Reads 2007 Evaluation

1. Have you read *The Color of Water*? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.  
If no, do you plan to? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
2. Have you visited the Long Island Reads website at [www.longislandreads.org](http://www.longislandreads.org)?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
3. Have you participated in any Long Island Reads events in the past? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
If yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you attend a Long Island Reads Book Club Summit? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.  
If yes, which one?  
Middle Country Public Library \_\_\_ ?  
Port Washington Public Library \_\_\_ ?
5. How did you hear about the Book Club Summit(s)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Are you in a Book Club? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
7. If you are in a Book Club, please tell us a little about your club:  
(For example: How often do you meet? How do you select the books? Where do you meet? How many people are members? Male or female only? Male and female? Age range? Type of books selected; fiction, non-fiction, classics, etc.?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. If you would like to suggest an author or title for Long Island Reads 2008, please do so below. Please let us know why you think this would be a good choice.

Your name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a librarian or library employee? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

**Please return this form to:**  
**Nassau Library System Outreach Services**  
**900 Jerusalem Avenue**  
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